Football World Cup final: Brazil 0 France 3

Polished French take ultimate prize

David Lacey in St-Denis

ZINEDINE ZIDANE brought a remarkable and historic World Cup triumph here. Two nods from the Marseille-born Juventus midfielder broke the grip Brazil had held on the trophy for the last four years. Then in the last minute Emmanuel Petit completed a 3-0 victory for the host nation from a pass by his Arsenal team-mate Patrick Vieira.

Little went right for Mario Zagallo's team. Seeking their fifth World Cup by retaining the trophy for the second time, Brazil's pre-match preparations were stalled by the late hospital check on Ronaldo's left ankle the centre-forward cleared to play by the team doctors only 45 minutes before kick-off.

Originally the Brazilians had Edmundo down to play in Ronaldo's place and their players did not come out before the start for their customary warm-up. Once the final began, moreover, the French took the initiative and never really lost it.

They did, however, lose Marcel Desailly to a second yellow card midway through the second half. Desailly, already booked for dissent, was then sent off for a foul on Cafu. He was only the third player to be sent off in a World Cup final, two Argentines — Pedro Monzon and Gustavo Dezotti — having set a precedent in Rome in 1990.

To have one defender, their sweeper Laurent Blanc, dismissed in the semi-final against Croatia was unfortunate. To lose another in the final looked careless.

The story of why Brazil collapsed in such startling fashion may prove more intriguing than the final itself. For the moment, however, France will hold the attention for the manner in which they won their first World Cup.

In essence they won it for much the same reasons that they won their only other major international tournament, the 1984 European Championship for which they were also the hosts. The present French midfield may not measure up to its predecessor of the eighties but its influence was equally profound.

Where Michel Platini, Alain Giresse and Jean Tigana once ruled, Didier Deschamps, Youri Djorkaeff and Petit held sway now. And when Djorkaeff tired in the second half Aimé Jacquet readily turned to the younger, longer legs of Vieira to run at the opposition and keep the pressure off his depleted defence.

It was Zidane's strength and judgment which twice punished Brazil at corners with near-post headers. Never has a team won a World Cup with such an obvious lack of a cutting edge to its attack. Both Stéphane Guivarc'h and his eventual replacement Christophe Dugarry missed simple opportunities.

But on the few occasions Brazil did look like scoring they were thwarted by the at times comical but increasingly capable Fabien Barthez in the French goal. Barthez has never made a more important save than the one that denied Ronaldo early in the second half.

The first goal arrived in the 27th minute. Petit's inswinging corner from the right evaded Lilian Thuram but behind him Zidane was already getting above Leonardo to meet the ball with a sharp downward header past Taffarel.

Little was going right for the holders. Ronaldo surged through the middle only to be flattened, innocently enough, by Barthez's determination in leaving his line to beat him to the ball. Bebeto slunk around the outside of the French defence to meet a cross from Leonardo but could get no power into his header.

Not so Zidane; both he and France were heading for glory. From Djorkaeff's corner on the left, Zidane thrust his way through the defence, brushed Dunga aside and again nodded the ball down into the net. For a player who had waited until now to score his first goals in the tournament Zidane's sense of timing was inspired.

After that few doubted what the outcome would be. Desailly's departure merely sharpened the closing drama, which included Denilson's shot clipping the French bar in the closing minutes.

As the match entered stoppage time Dugarry found Vieira to his left and he in turn sent Petit through to score with a precise shot inside the left-hand post. Now France could believe it: at last, for the nation's football, the day of glory really had arrived.



World in his hands . . . Zidane clutches the trophy as Desailly shares his joy PHOTO: GABRIEL BOUYS

Cryptic crossword by Paul

Across

1 Censor set about 'The Sun' editing 'drat' to make sweet (7,4)
9 Batting rhythm required for bowling movement (7)
10 An idiot on the river Scheldt (7)
11 Running away together from work, into the rain perhaps? (9)
12 Incisor, a canine to a postman? (5)
13 U 2 (4)
14 Difficult case for Mrs Reagan with Germany in uprising (10)
16 Sell cheap, as 8,13,19 and 23 hope to do without 16 down? (2,3,1,4)
19 Certainly not Old 21 (4)
21 Scotsman backs service in Scotland (5)
22 The friend of a relative is a fair target (4,5)
24 Sitting after standing (7)
25 Something to eat, appropriate almost every one scoffed (7)
26 Curly hairdo in 13 style, yet bizarrely it's a seed plant (11)

Down

1 Case inspectors cracked — cost of crime? Fuss (7,8)
2 Epics tortured on the rack? (6)
3 Those hoping for a nibble ran with legs crossed (7)
4 Conscript places makeshift boat in the river (7)
5 Very little response to disease from Tony Blair's first aid kit? (8)
6 8,13 and a bit 23! (3,4,4,4)
7 Assembly of mountain railway? (4-2)
8 Active 2 (6)
15 Ruffian gets around trap (not fair) (8)
16 2 2 (6)
17 Fame achieved by switching autocracy's leaders (7)
18 Topless Poles entertained continuously (3-4)
20 Solvers not finished? Same again! Editor became very unsettled (2-4)
23 Horrible 2 (5)

Last week's solution

E	X	H	I	B	I	T	O	R		S	T	I	N	G
A		I		E		I		E		E		N		A
R	E	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	A	T	I	V	E	S
T		B		F		R		R		T		A		H
H	E	A	R				P	A	L	L	A	D	I	O
		T		C		T		C		E		E		L
O	C	H	L	O	C	R	A	T		M	I	R	E	D
L				M		A		I		E				E
I	L	E	U	M		V	O	L	U	N	T	E	E	R
G		Y		E		E		E		T		G		
A	B	S	U	R	D	L	Y				A	G	E	S
R		E		C		L		S		S		B		I
C	O	N	F	I	D	E	N	C	E	T	R	I	C	K
H		C		A		R		A		U		R		H
Y	O	K	E	L		S	I	M	O	N	I	D	E	S

Rugby Union Australia 24 New Zealand 16

High price of Aussie victory

Greg Growden in Melbourne

AUSTRALIA's first win over the All Blacks since August 1994 came with an injury-list attached which will prevent them being able to field an unchanged side for a record fifth successive Test. The Wallabies' prop Richard Harry dislocated a knee in the opening minutes of the Bledisloe Cup match here and will miss Saturday's second Tri-Nations fixture against South Africa in Perth.

There are doubts also over the right-wing Ben Tune (strained left knee) and the hooker Phil Kearns (bruised ribs), while other injuries include the flanker David Wilson (sore left shoulder), the replacement back-row forward Willie Ofahengaue (strained knee ligaments) and the centres Tim Horan and Daniel Herbert, who have bruised knee caps.

That Australia have so many walking wounded was hardly surprising after a fearless defensive effort that frustrated New Zealand and delighted the majority of the 75,000 crowd.

They exposed the All Blacks' frailties that have emerged since the retirement of Sean Fitzpatrick, the centre Frank Bunce and the No 8 Zinzan Brooke, and Matt Burke's finishing with hand and foot consigned them to their first defeat in almost two years.

The Wallabies focused much of their attacking firepower on Bunce's replacement Scott McLeod, and the new centre's tackling was found wanting. They also surprised their opponents with unexpected tactical changes. The All Blacks assumed Australia would sweep wide on winning line-out ball, but instead they ran straight or went down the blindside.

New Zealand's flanker Josh Kronfeld said that Australia had done what the All Blacks generally did to their opponents — outfought them.

As important, Australia did not get carried away by the euphoria. At full-time their captain John Eales called his players into a huddle. After telling them that victory was "tremendous" and they had every right to celebrate, he stressed that the job was not finished, because there were still two more Bledisloe Cup matches to play — at Christchurch and Sydney next month.

It was a night of high achievement for Burke, who broke the individual points record against New Zealand which he himself held. His tally of 24, from two tries, four penalty goals and a conversion, surpassed the 20 points he had scored against the All Blacks in Brisbane in 1996.

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The Washington Post · Le Monde

Nelson Mandela and his bride, Graca Machel, prepare to cut his 80th birthday cake PHOTO: WALTER DHLADHLA

Mandela celebrates birthday with a wedding

STEVIE Wonder and Michael Jackson led 2,000 guests in an ecstatic double celebration of Nelson Mandela's third marriage and 80th birthday last Sunday, *David Beresford reports from Johannesburg.*

"There are few occasions in which I am so overwhelmed that I cannot even speak. But I never imagined that the treatment to an old man, simply because he is old, would take such a momentous dimension," President Mandela told the gathering at a conference centre outside Johannesburg.

Singer Nina Simone, actor Danny Glover, former African heads of state Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere, and paying guests forking out up to $1,500 to charity for the privilege of a seat joined the festivities broadcast live on state television.

Congratulations to Mr Mandela and his bride, Graca Machel, poured in from around the world and all parts of South Africa, including a warm tribute from the National party, which was responsible for jailing Mr Mandela for 27 years.

"We are sure she will be a gracious first lady as well as a supportive and understanding presence in the president's life, which he so richly deserves," the party said of the man it used to denounce as a terrorist.

The only criticism amid the festivities came from a chief in Mr Mandela's home village of Qunu, Thelodumo Mtirara, who complained that the president — whose tribal name is Madiba — had not informed the Thembu clan about his wedding plans.

Mr Mandela and Ms Machel — widow of the Mozambique president, Samora Machel — were married in a private ceremony at their home in the Johannesburg suburb of Houghton last Saturday, after weeks of denials from presidential spokesmen that a wedding was planned.

Bishop Desmond Tutu delivered the a sermon and, in a show of inter-faith unity, blessings were pronounced by Muslim and Hindu religious leaders.

The First Couple left South Africa this week for state visits to Brazil and Argentina.

Way cleared for Lockerbie bomb trial

Ian Black

BRITAIN and the United States have decided that two Libyans accused of the Lockerbie bombing can be tried in The Hague under Scottish law, reversing their position that justice can be done only under their jurisdiction — and shifting the onus on to Colonel Muammar Gadafy to hand them over.

The British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and the US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, are expected to make simultaneous announcements in London and Washington this week.

The U-turn follows growing evidence that the campaign to isolate Libya through sanctions is crumbling in the face of Libyan obduracy.

Britain and the US reached agreement earlier this month, but the announcement has been held up pending a new government in the Netherlands, whose approval is required for the trial to go ahead.

Abdel Basset al-Megrahi and Lamin Khalifah Fhimah, described as Libyan intelligence agents, were accused in November 1991 of planting the suitcase bomb that killed 270 people on Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie on December 21, 1988.

It was the worst act of terrorism in recent British history, and there have been conflicting theories about who was responsible. Libya has refused to hand over the men, despite United Nations sanctions which Britain and the US find increasingly hard to maintain while they refuse to accept a trial in a third country.

Both had insisted the trial could be held only in Scotland or the US, and had rejected as disingenuous Libyan claims that the two could not get justice under such jurisdiction.

Jim Swire, of UK Families Flight 103, said on Monday: "I'm very relieved both from the point of view of obtaining justice over the murder of our families and also that our government will not now continue on a course fraught with danger for its reputation. But this is not a time for triumphalism. Lockerbie was a terrible disaster. Let us hope that this decision provides a way forward."

Libya has not yet been informed of the new position, which is likely to follow closely a proposal made by the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity, which have said Col Gadafy will accept a court operating under Scottish legal procedure. Under this proposal it would have an international panel of judges instead of a jury, presided over by a senior Scottish judge appointed by Tony Blair.

Diplomats believe it is unlikely that Col Gadafy will surrender the men, but hope that this gamble by the West will reinforce sanctions.

Nigeria promised civilian rule in '99

Alex Duval Smith in Lagos

NIGERIA'S new leader, Abdulsalam Abubakar, on Monday announced a sweeping plan to move to civilian rule, including a promise of presidential elections.

In a 40-minute television and radio broadcast overtly aimed at raising international confidence in a nation whose leaders have made it a political pariah, General Abubakar rejected opposition calls for a role in the transition. But he said a civilian president would be sworn in on May 29, 1999, after elections in the first quarter of next year.

Wearing full military regalia for the broadcast and reading from a script, Gen Abubakar said the elections would be preceded by moves to allow the free formation of political parties and freedom of association.. There would also be a campaign to rid the country of corruption.

Even though the date set for handing over power to a civilian president is later than the October 1 date promised by his predecessor, General Sani Abacha, who died last month, the wide-ranging reforms he set out are likely to impress the international community.

The Commonwealth secretary-general, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, welcomed the announcement of a return to civilian rule, saying the general had provided "further evidence of his commitment to national reconciliation and establishment of a credible process to democracy in Nigeria".

The United States also gave an initial welcome: "At first glance this is a welcome step in the direction of the kind of credible transition toward democracy that the international community has been urging," said the state department's spokesman, James Rubin.

In Nigeria, however, the pledges will be greeted with scepticism by some opposition figures, who view every further month of military rule as an opportunity for new abuses of power to become entrenched. They had called for a government of national unity along South African lines after the collapse of apartheid.

Gen Abubakar said: "Such an arrangement would be full of pitfalls, and this is a danger this administration cannot accept. A government of national unity whose composition would be selected would be undemocratic."

He promised that a new cabinet would be appointed soon to "reflect various shades of opinion" and said local officials elected after Abacha came to power in 1993 would lose their jobs. He promised independence for the judiciary.

He said charges against all political prisoners — believed to number about 300 — would be quashed. Earlier on Monday he released 10 prisoners.

Calling on the international community to show patience and promising to "accomplish our objectives within the shortest time possible", Gen Abubakar dissolved the five political parties created by Abacha to ensure his own annointment as civilian president.

The 56-year-old leader, who came to power after Abacha died on June 7, also annulled all previous elections — "for their widespread lack of credibility" — in which the five parties had taken part.

Gen Abubakar, who insisted that the military had no desire to remain in power, said: "This administration will not interfere with the formation of political parties, and international observers will be allowed to observe elections."

He scrapped the electoral commission put in place by Abacha and said a new one would be responsible for registering voters and political parties.

In a thinly veiled attack on Abacha — now portrayed by the military as the worst leader Nigeria ever had — Gen Abubakar said: "Our most recent attempt at democratisation was marred by manoeuvring and manipulation."

Nigeria has laboured under limited international sanctions since General Ibrahim Babangida, a close adviser to Gen Abubakar, nullified presidential elections held on June 12, 1993.

They are believed to have been won by Moshood Abiola, who was subsequently jailed by Abacha. His death earlier this month after a meeting with a US delegation to discuss his release from jail, sparked riots and increased pressure on Gen Abubakar to announce sweeping reforms.

Washington Post, page 16

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 600	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Reading Cambodia's past into its present

PERHAPS it has not crossed Martin Woollacott's mind that the international community — which bears considerable responsibility in Cambodia's history of the past 30 years — has finally come to have some consideration for the people of the country, who must surely be judged to have had enough (Cambodia keeps killing fields alive, July 5).

In his analysis Woollacott fails to reflect the true complexity of the current political situation and does a great disservice to the Cambodian people. He compiles his facts and opinions with selectivity and precision in damning the second prime minister, Hun Sen, and the Cambodian People's party (CPP), ignoring numerous other facts and interpretations that would have given his article greater balance and done more justice to the predicament that Cambodians find themselves in.

One of the paradoxes of the current election campaign is the fact that despite a climate of political repression 38 other political parties have registered and are daily to be seen campaigning through the streets of Phnom Penh and elsewhere in the country. While some of them are said to be Hun Sen stringers, others clearly are not. Why does Woollacott barely acknowledge their existence? He focuses solely on the problems of the election technicalities — of which there are undoubtedly many — without making mention of the numerous people, Cambodian and expatriate, who are working hard to overcome them?

He ignores the racist campaign being conducted by Hun Sen's two main political opponents, Norodom Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy. The effect of their cynical manipulation of Cambodians' fears is outbreaks of violence, a heightening of anti-Vietnamese sentiment, and persecution of the many Vietnamese living in Cambodia.

To say that Cambodia has become more of a Khmer Rouge state is to insult the experience of those who lived through Pol Pot's regime. It also demonstrates a significant failure to understand the complexity of the post-Pol Pot era. The past actions of many good people would not stand up to close examination — they will tell you they did what they had to do in order to survive. Who are we — we who cannot even imagine the terrors and depredations of their experience — to judge them?

There is no evidence to suggest that any of those currently campaigning for power in Cambodia would exercise it in the true spirit of democracy, and the options for the people are therefore grim by Western standards. Many who live and work here believe that whatever its faults, the CPP is almost certainly the only party capable of running the country.

The alternative is that Cambodia's fragile grip on progress would be further weakened by a government that would add inexperience to all the other problems it faces. If the CPP fails to win an election that is deemed to be free and fair, many of Woollacott's persuasion would have the country experience another period of extended international isolation. That is something the people of Cambodia certainly don't need.

Jenny Pearson,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tide is turning against Holy See

THE POPE and Cardinal Ratzinger may be turning on the liberals, but are we listening and are we afraid (Pope turns on liberal Catholics, July 12)? I think not, for any threat of excommunication would only officialise the exclusion that we already face. The reactionary and authoritarian approach to the enormous amount of teaching and theology that is being written by Catholic women, Catholic homosexuals, lay Catholics and the clergy only enhances and justifies the need to stand firm against such a hardline view.

Such a threat brings me to question who is being excommunicated? The outspoken liberal for questioning the "infallibility of oppressive doctrines", the poor and oppressed groups marginalised by the Church who believe and seek liberation through their faith in a God of love, or the cardinals who won't open the debate for fear of losing their (apparent) authority over us and admitting that change is needed?

What is perhaps most worrying for the papal congregation is that the marginalised and excluded people of the Church are already excommunicated by the exclusive doctrines of the official Roman Catholic Church. To further and publicly affirm that would (Cardinal Ratzinger probably believes) silence the marginalised, but is it not in our powerlessness that we are powerful, in our silencing that we are heard?

The growing faith and hope that feminist, gay liberation and black theology offer not only weakens the oppressive hard line, but strengthens and brings into realisation a truly Catholic viewpoint — one of cultural sensitivity, diversity and inclusion of all believers, a universal Church.

Damien Arthur,
Tokyo, Japan

Ulster echoes to sound of bigotry

THE ORANGE Order was set up to assert Protestant supremacy. Its most visual way of doing this is to march through Catholic areas making military noises with pipes and drums to celebrate the Battle of the Boyne. Is it any wonder that the Orange Order at Portadown questions the point of an Orange Order that can no longer assert Protestant supremacy in this way? Of course, because there is none.

The Order is an anachronism; we should not be surprised that it draws in racists from England and Scotland who wish to assert their religious and racial superiority, nor Ulster's men of violence who wish to ethnically cleanse their area.

They must be challenged. There is no "right to march" asserting religious supremacy. Attempting to hide bigotry under the guise of "Protestant culture" is merely sophistry.

Derek Smith,
London

THE IRISH are divided into two camps, one proclaiming its loyalty to the Crown, the other to the Church. Let us test these loyalties. Have the Queen call upon her Irish subjects to cease making provocative marches and the Pope and bishops call upon their followers to renounce the IRA and all violence. Then let the Crown and Church take the appropriate action against those who ignore their edicts.

(Rev) Ian Scott-Buccleuch,
Toronto, Canada

ONE OF my ancestors fought with William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne, and I myself am a Protestant missionary in a Catholic country. But I am saddened by the childish and un-Christian insistence of the Orange Order on provoking and humiliating the Catholics of Portadown.

At the same time, why must the nationalist community be so childish as to allow itself to be provoked? Couldn't the residents of the Garvaghy Road adopt, for example, the form of protest used by the ex-PoWs in Japan, by lining the road with their backs turned?

Geoffrey Allen,
Pavia, Italy

Nostalgia for a tarnished age

CLIVE HAMILTON'S article was the most clear-sighted of the many I have read on Australia's "the populist political earthquake" (June 21). He could perhaps have emphasised that Pauline Hanson's appeal is to every shade of nostalgia for a Golden Age which, as usual, glistens ever more brightly as it recedes further into the past. Australia was uniquely homogeneous. One could easily travel its length and breadth without seeing a non-European or hearing a foreign tongue. In contrast to the United States or Canada, of comparable size, the ordinary ear would not even detect any change in accent, excluding those of the British Isles.

Enterprises did not sack staff by thousands at a time. There was low unemployment and no permanent unemployment. Middle-aged people, in what they thought to be settled and useful jobs, were not made redundant.

Most people in this highly urbanised country never saw an Aborigine. Country people saw them but they could be ignored as they weren't allowed in the town baths or the pubs. So there was no "Aboriginal problem" in the Golden Age.

While any gold in the present age is only available to a few of us, Hanson's ideas or worse will flourish, as no one seems seriously concerned about it.

J T Wearne,
Fremantle, WA, Australia

CLIVE HAMILTON and Professor Giovanni Carsaniga (June 28) have given accurate and humane explanations for the easily ridiculed Queensland "redneck" One Nation political movement.

Those British intellectuals who already misunderstand the nature of ex-colonies might easily extrapolate a simplistic and contemptuous caricature of all Australians. I am a New Zealander who has lived and worked in Britain, where I often observed distressing racism. Then I moved to Australia, where I was delighted to discover that most Australians firmly reject the racism of their colonial past and positively welcome a multi-cultural Australia.

In a world where Bosnia is still possible and football fans yearn for a real war, let us not find escape in stereotypes.

Janet Kenny,
Mosman, NSW, Australia

Briefly

IT MAY well be that the winning argument for granting 100,000 new British passports was the fact that very few people would take up citizenship in the UK from British Dependent Territories (July 19). But the decision to grant passports is important and deeply symbolic, against the backdrop of strongly held views within the ethnic minority communities in the UK that Gibraltar and the Falklands were treated differently from other British Dependent Territories.

The Government is to be congratulated for taking this important step when many of us believe that there has been so much unfairness over the years in British nationality policy.

Claude Moraes,
Director, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, London

IT IS fitting that China, on the eve of her bid to be accepted into the capitalist brotherhood and sisterhood of nations, should be reminded of her recent violations in the field of human rights (July 5). But to listen to the self-righteous, self-satisfied words uttered by Bill Clinton on the subject of Tiananmen Square and the status of Tibet is more than the world deserves to bear.

Fiona Taler,
Adelaide, Australia

DESPITE racism, the UK is a multicultural and multiracial society in a way that many of our European neighbours are not. If C Perraton Mountford (June 28) notes in England a "crippling fear of being different", he should try life in a small town in Portugal; charming though we find it, cultural diversity is not a strong point. Rather than totally denigrate the UK, let's recognise that much of the world is a lot worse.

Chris Wright,
Castelo Branco, Portugal

EQUATING child mortality with the lack of progress on debt relief is naive (June 21). In practice, many governments don't spend what resources they have wisely — corruption, prestigious buildings, massive spending on the armed forces; the list is endless — and reducing the debt burden may well make hardly any difference to child poverty. Debt relief, along with development aid, must go hand in hand with better governance.

Anthony Hovey,
Opuwo, Namibia

THE proliferation of tsars (drugs, streets) will eventually require a tsar's tsar. Could Ms Gabor be appointed?

Adam Sandelson,
London

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US plans to thwart war crimes court

John Hooper in Rome

DESPOTS, torturers, commanders of the world's more undisciplined armed forces and the heads of its more pitiless intelligence services woke up this week with niggling doubts.

In Rome last Saturday government ministers from 30 states gathered to sign a treaty that could alter the lives of the inhumane and tyrannical. It means that one day they could be dragged to a court in The Hague, brought to account for their actions and put behind bars for the rest of their lives.

It took five weeks of intense negotiations between representatives of 160 states to agree to a new permanent, global court to try crimes of genocide and aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Born in the most dramatic circumstances, the International Criminal Court (ICC) faces an uncertain future.

A majority of states voted for its creation last week. But the world's most powerful and populous nations – the United States and China – rejected it. Those who support the court have taken the remarkable step of abrogating to it the power to try a suspect, even if the country that he or she comes from refuses to acknowledge its jurisdiction.

The US is to seek changes in the treaty setting up the court. If that fails, it will "actively oppose" ratification and implementation of the treaty, the state department spokesman James Rubin said.

Mr Rubin said the treaty in its present form could complicate US participation in military operations abroad, because of the fear that the court will adopt frivolous or politically motivated war-crime prosecutions against US soldiers.

The US delegation used strong-arm tactics in the final hours of the conference to water down the treaty and guarantee immunity for American citizens. But by then it was clear that the tactics were not working. The turning point had come the day before, when the countries declaring support for a strong, independent court — including Britain — refused to accept a Japanese proposal designed to mollify the Americans.

Instead, they agreed to a compromise on the key issue of jurisdiction based on a proposal put forward by Britain. Although highly restrictive and bitterly resented by some of the court's proponents as a sell-out, the compromise succeeded in winning France to the ranks of the majority.

The final session began — just four-and-a-half hours before the deadline for an agreement — with a moment of high emotion. The conference chairman, Phillippe Kirsch of Canada, gave the floor to the man who was to have occupied his place. Adriaan Bos, a Dutch diplomat, was diagnosed as having cancer weeks before the conference started.

In an impassioned speech, he told delegates, in effect, that they had gone far enough in trying to placate the US. "Efforts to reach compromises have been used to the maximum," he said. "We cannot let ourselves destroy the essentials of an International Criminal Court ... a new institution that gives hope to the entire world that we can hope to bring to justice those who transgress the most basic human principles."

The final vote on the treaty was more decisive than anyone would have predicted. With 120 votes for and just seven against, it was among the most devastating routs suffered by US diplomacy.

Britain's Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said: "It's a big breakthrough. The court will have an independent prosecutor, and I don't think that the changes that have been made strike at the heart of the court. It will be a strong court with a wide remit that will send a signal to the Saddam Husseins and Pol Pots that they will be held to account and brought to justice."

An unexpected momentum built up in those final hours. It emerged that Russia had also defected from the camp of the Big Powers, leaving the US alone with China. The only other state to admit voting against the treaty in the unrecorded ballot was Israel, which objected to a provision on the forcible movement of populations.

Others suspected of opposing it included Libya, Algeria and Yemen. As the Canadian foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, remarked, it was "not exactly the company the United States should be keeping". Not even the Indian delegation, which had fought the text tooth and nail, could bring itself to cast a "no" vote.

Momentum will be greatly needed in the years to come. The ICC can come into existence only when 60 countries have ratified the treaty. It will require that governments make its creation a priority. Diplomats said the process could take at least five years, but some human rights activists were more optimistic. "The court could be up and running in as little as one-and-a-half to two years," said one.

Doubts will still hang over its operation. Under the compromise on jurisdiction, prosecutions not referred by the UN Security Council will require approval from either the state of nationality of the accused or country in which the alleged crime was committed. Amnesty International's secretary-general, Pierre Sane, said: "This court requires the permission of criminals to face trial." The remaining doubt is how hostile Washington will be.

KLA rebels snub Kosovo politicians

Jonathan Steele

THE KOSOVO Liberation Army, the increasingly powerful armed champions of independence from Serbia, has thrown the province's politicians into disarray with a demand that their parties should "disband, create a united front and join the KLA".

The statement by Jakub Krasniqi, the KLA's official spokesman, snubs Kosovo's best-known political leaders, including the unofficial "President of Kosovo", Ibrahim Rugova, who has had strong backing from Western governments. "We don't acknowledge him as president," Mr Krasniqi said in an interview with the Albanian-language newspaper, Koha Ditore.

He accused Mr Rugova of "a series of mistakes", from his agreement to meet the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, in May without consulting other political forces, to his failure to set up a coalition government in Kosovo representing all Kosovo Albanian opinion. Until he took up the gun this spring, Mr Krasniqi led the local branch of Mr Rugova's party, the Democratic League of Kosovo, in the region of Glogoc.

Mr Krasniqi's demand for primacy over the civilian politicians reflects the confidence of a movement that has grown within barely four months from a few isolated groups of men with rifles to a well-armed force estimated to be at least 10,000 strong.

● Serbian security forces said on Monday they were in full control of the southwest Kosovan town of Orahovac. They said they had driven the KLA from the town after two days of fighting.



Fidelis Kempa sits in the ruined village of Sissano. He lost all six of his grandchildren PHOTO: BRIAN CASSEY

PNG tidal wave wipes out a generation

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

SHATTERED, silent and shocked villagers were coaxed from the jungle on Monday as an international rescue effort began to save hundreds of injured survivors of the Papua New Guinea tidal waves triggered by two undersea earthquakes.

There were fears the death toll could rise to 6,000. Most of a generation of children from three north coast villages seemed lost. Many thousands could be homeless.

A Catholic priest, Father Augustine Kulmana, said 70 per cent of the villagers left alive were adults, as most children had been swept away by the 10m waves that demolished their simple homes along the Sissano Lagoon on Friday last week.

The prime minister of Papua New Guinea, Bill Skate, joined in the search for people hiding in the jungle in fear of further waves.

Australian doctors, nurses and engineers have put up a field hospital at Vanimo, near the disaster zone, and have begun to operate on the injured who are ferried in by helicopters.

The Australian prime minister, John Howard, said: "As a close friend, neighbour and helper we will do all we can to help the very unfortunate people of this country whose living standard is low, and they now have visited upon them this terrible, personal disaster."

The horror is seen in the hundreds of shallow graves and in the unknown number of bodies still in the lagoon.

Disease is a threat and even minor wounds can become life-threatening infections. In the nearby town of Aitape, 90 people who survived the waves but died later from their injuries were buried in a mass grave.

Medical teams from the Australian military have established muster points in the jungle to encourage survivors to leave the area. New Zealand has sent two emergency relief flights and medics. Charities in Australia are sending emergency aid.

Survivors have carried the injured to the tiny district hospitals that are now stretched to the limit. "There will be hundreds of injured still to find and each night there will be hundreds dying," said an expatriate businessman, Robert Parer.

The Week

INTERNATIONAL aid workers pulled out of the Afghan capital, Kabul, after the Taliban authorities ordered them to move to a derelict college building without power or running water, or leave the city.

THE IMF approved an $11.2 billion loan for Russia but handed over less cash than expected to encourage Moscow to stick to its tough programme of reforms. The IMF said Russia would receive $4.8 billion immediately, $800 million less than expected, because there had been "delays in implementing" some of the loan conditions.
Martin Kettle, page 6

THE Caribbean state of St Kitts and Nevis defied international protests to carry out its first hanging in 17 years. David Wilson went to the gallows on Monday, two years after being convicted of killing Kenneth Herbert, aged 54, a security guard.

LAURENT Fabius, the former French prime minister, and two of his ministers are to be tried for manslaughter after the 1985 contaminated-blood scandal that resulted in the death of nearly 300 people.

HUMAN rights organisations in France have criticised President Jacques Chirac for inviting the Syrian leader Hafez al-Assad to Paris — his first official visit to Europe for 22 years — to discuss Middle East peace initiatives.

JORGE Rafael Videla, leader of the junta that seized power in a 1976 coup in Argentina who was detained on allegations of kidnapping children during the "dirty war", has been indicted. He will remain in jail until the start of his case, with bail set at nearly $5 million.

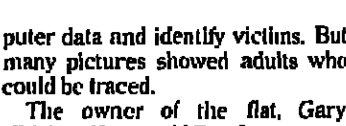
THE Sudan People's Liberation Army declared a three-month ceasefire to allow delivery of relief supplies to hundreds of thousands of starving people in the southwestern Bahr al-Ghazal province. The government responded with a truce lasting only a month.

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton has restored credits for agricultural sales to India and Pakistan. These were cut off after the two countries carried out nuclear tests in May.

YEMEN accused Saudi Arabia of attacking a Yemeni island in the Red Sea with ships and long-range artillery, killing three people and wounding nine.

INDONESIAN officials have been warned by a geologist that Jakarta, the country's capital, is sinking, and that high-rise buildings might soon start to lean and crack.
Chinese women raped, page 7

Dutch raid uncovers global child porn ring



Ian Traynor in Bonn

A WORLDWIDE manhunt began last week for members of a child pornography ring after Dutch police discovered tens of thousands of shocking pictures, traded on the Internet, of sexual abuse of children, including babies.

The international ring, said by experts to be among the most extensive Internet child pornography networks discovered, came to light after police raided a flat in the seaside town of Zandvoort, outside Amsterdam.

Child abuse experts said the photos depicted the most distressing scenes they had witnessed. Wim Wolters, a child psychiatrist at Utrecht university, who inspected some of the material found in the flat, said: "I've never seen anything like this. The pictures show very disgusting things, sexual abuse, violence, and the tying up of young children. There were children aged four to five, children aged eight to nine, and I saw one child of about 18 months."

The raid on the flat, which belonged to a member of the ring who was murdered a few weeks ago, uncovered sophisticated computer equipment, discs containing tens of thousands of photographs of children being raped, and encrypted files containing the details of associates and customers.

The information reportedly revealed contacts between the Dutch gang and Warwick Spinks, one of the most notorious child abusers in Britain.

Spinks, aged 33, was released from prison last July after serving 30 months of a seven-year term for drugging and abducting a 14-year-old boy. He is described by police as one of Britain's most wanted men. On his release last year he refused to sign the new sex offenders' register and disappeared. The boy he abducted was sold to a gay brothel in Amsterdam, from which he escaped.

Sources said the FBI, Scotland Yard and detectives from Germany and Belgium were involved in the investigation, which was headed by a 20-strong team of Dutch detectives and computer specialists. The gang had contacts in countries including Britain, the United States, Russia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Belgium.

A Dutch police spokesman said of the case: "It is clear that there are no borders where the spread of Internet porn is concerned."

Sources said it could take the police months to unravel the computer data and identify victims. But many pictures showed adults who could be traced.

The owner of the flat, Gary Ulrich, a 49-year-old Dutch computer equipment salesman, was shot dead several weeks ago outside Milan. A suspect, Robbie van der Planken, is in police custody in Pisa. Spinks's name was also found among Van der Planken's belongings.

It is thought that the dead man was a member of the child porn ring who was trying to leave the gang when he was murdered. Ulrich had handed over some of the incriminating material to Belgian campaigners against child abuse.

Dutch police also raided the Zandvoort house of Van der Planken and found more incriminating material there. Officers later announced they had detained two women said to have been trying to destroy evidence relating to the investigation. One was reported to be a relative of Ulrich.

The police operation resulted from an 18-month investigation by a television journalist, Erik van Zwam, and a Belgian campaigner against child abuse, Marcel Vervloesem.

On Monday Mr Vervloesem won a promise of a multinational police investigation. He handed over his evidence of the porn ring to Belgian police after a dramatic two days, during which he was arrested and his house was raided.

Mr Vervloesem, aged 45, of the Morkhoven action group which has been investigating child pornography for almost 10 years, has a long history of conflict with the Belgian authorities, which are widely reviled because of their bungled investigations into a series of notorious paedophile scandals.

For several years, the campaigners produced evidence of a child porn ring centred on Madeira and handed it over to the police. Nothing happened until last November, when the evidence was shown on Dutch television. Arrests and convictions of paedophiles in Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal followed promptly, but this was years after Mr Vervloesem had given the material to the police.

Initially researching the fate of a Berlin teenager who disappeared in 1993, apparently abducted and forced into the Dutch sex trade, he established contact with Ulrich.

"He knew we were investigating and he got frightened," said Mr Vervloesem. "Then he got some phone calls from England and he got even more frightened. He said he didn't have long to live."



Soldiers in Yekaterinburg guard the remains of Russia's royal family, murdered in 1918 PHOTO MIKHAIL METZEL

Last tsar's remains finally laid to rest

James Meek in St Petersburg

IT WAS more dignified, and peaceful, than anyone could have expected. Nicholas and Alexandra were buried last week in an eye of history's storm, with the evil memories, the dire warnings, the doubts, the sneers, the accusations of hypocrisy, blasphemy and vulgarity stilled for an hour of family mourning and Russian atonement.

The funeral service for Russia's last imperial family was shown live on national television, yet it was as much a private event as a public one, trebly cut off from the world beyond — inside the 295-year-old Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul, the oldest building in St Petersburg, itself inside a fortress, itself on an island.

Even President Boris Yeltsin, who delivered a powerful and sombre speech expressing Russia's shame at the murder of the tsar and tsarina and their household, slipped in and out of the cathedral by a side door, to avoid the media army.

"By burying the remains of murdered innocents we want to atone for the sins of our ancestors," he said. "Those who committed this crime are guilty, as are those who approved of it for decades. We are all guilty. It is impossible to lie to ourselves by justifying senseless cruelty on political grounds."

As Communist party chief in Yekaterinburg, then called Sverdlovsk, in 1977, Mr Yeltsin carried out the orders of the politburo to destroy the house where the Romanovs were executed, to prevent the building becoming a monarchist shrine. Now he stood in the Romanov family church, surrounded by living descendants of the Romanovs, urging Russia never to forget what happened in 1918.

"Burying the victims of the Yekaterinburg tragedy is an act of humane justice, a symbol of unification in Russia and redemption of common guilt. In the face of the historical memory of the nation we are responsible . . . I bow my head to the victims of these merciless killings."

Mr Yeltsin, whose own reign may be drawing to a close and who yearns for a place in history as the man who put Russia on the road to prosperity, said the killing of the Romanovs 80 years ago showed the futility of violence as an instrument of change.

Israeli jailed for poison gas sales to Iran

Julian Borger in Tel Aviv

ISRAEL'S most controversial treason trial in more than 10 years came to a dramatic close last week when Nahum Manbar was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment for supplying Iran with the chemicals and know-how to make poison gas.

As the presiding judge, Amnon Strashnov, read out the sentence, pandemonium broke out in the Tel Aviv court. Photographers leaped over seats to take pictures of the defendant in a sensational trial that had mutated from a spy-drama to sex-scandal.

Manbar's lawyers said they would appeal to the supreme court, arguing that Judge Strashnov was unfit to try the case because he was having an affair with a young member of the defence team. They also claimed the judge consulted the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, on the verdict.

The claims have been vehemently denied by Mr Netanyahu, Judge Strashnov and his alleged mistress, Pninat Yanai.

Manbar, a stocky 51-year-old businessman, listened impassively in the dock as the judge read out his crimes, including the sale to the Iranian government of large quantities of chemical precursors for mustard gas and nerve gas.

At the end of a 10-hour hearing, during which he was reduced to tears, Manbar said: "I made a mistake, but the mistake did not stem from any will to harm the state of Israel."

Judge Strashnov said: "Our impression of the accused is completely negative. We have convicted him of the most grievous security offences, namely aiding the enemy in its war against Israel and passing on information with the intention of damaging state security."

Manbar shouted as he was taken away: "Everything will be all right. We will appeal."

Mr Netanyahu praised the court decision, saying: "The court did the right thing. This was a very serious challenge to national security. An Israeli citizen provided the material of death to an Iranian regime that is committed to our destruction."

Hopes for peace rise in East Timor

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bacau

AN AIRSTRIP that 23 years ago helped launch ferocious Indonesian bombing of East Timor's pro-independence movement became the focus last weekend of United Nations peace efforts.

The UN special envoy, Jamsheed Marker, emerged from talks in an airport building in the coastal town of Bacau speaking of "desire for a peaceful settlement as early as possible" in the disputed territory.

After meeting priests, politicians, guerrilla leaders and student militants, Mr Marker said: "They showed a willingness to talk, to discuss, even for compromise." The presence in the same place of pro- and anti-independence figures was evidence of the possibilities for peace presented by the downfall of Indonesia's autocratic leader, Suharto. East Timor's Nobel Peace laureate, Bishop Carlos Belo, hailed "a miracle".

President B J Habibie appears determined to reach a settlement, Mr Marker said after talks in Jakarta. But there was strong government resistance to the envoy's visit to East Timor, illustrating the battle that lies ahead if peace is to be brought to the former Portuguese colony, which was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and annexed a year later.

The government and Bishop Belo feared Mr Marker's visit would trigger violence. But the authorities delivered Mr Marker to Bacau in a military aircraft. His stay lasted some three hours, and few people in East Timor were allowed to know he was there. Such a gathering would have been unthinkable only months ago.

"It is not a sign of change," insisted Mahunu, a former underground resistance leader. "Our leader [José 'Xanana' Gusmao] is still in prison and our people are still in trauma." But even he was pleased with the talks.

A couple of prominent businessmen made a case for a "new contract" of autonomy that sounds suspiciously like the old argument for integration. Any referendum on the status of East Timor would be deferred for at least 10 years. Bishop Belo says there can be no solution without a referendum.

Student leaders from East Timor's capital, Dili, appeared to urge the formation of a transitional government when Indonesia holds elections next year, and pressed for the UN to monitor human rights.

East Timor's jailed separatist leader, José "Xanana" Gusmao, meanwhile urged Portugal and Indonesia to increase diplomatic contacts. After meeting Mr Marker in Jakarta's notorious Cipinang prison, Mr Gusmao said that his detention should no longer be an obstacle to the opening of "interest sections" in each of the two capitals.

But a reduction in Indonesia's military presence may prove harder to achieve. Human rights groups note that the number of troops has risen sharply even as the government talks about withdrawal.



Beijing's ex-mayor faces lurid trial

John Gittings

A FORMER mayor of Beijing will finally be tried for corruption in a sensational affair that has gripped the popular Chinese press. Chen Xitong, whose case has been pending since 1995, is charged with "corruption and dereliction of duty", according to a statement last week from the national prosecutors' office.

It is not known whether the trial will be held in public; many believe this could prove embarrassing for other leaders. But it is talked of as "the biggest show since the [1981] trial of the Gang of Four".

Mr Chen was the senior Communist party figure in Beijing and played a big part in the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. He came unstuck when a corrupt subordinate committed suicide in 1985, implicating Mr Chen, his associates and his son.

Popular magazines at Chinese newsstands have denounced Mr Chen for months as the king of a corruption ring. They have also published exposés of his extramarital affairs, including an alleged liaison with the younger sister of his wife — who is herself accused of corruption.

A popular jingle parodies the "Four Principles" of the Communist party: "Always eat other people's food; never buy your own drink; always save your wages; and don't stick to your own wife."

The Chen case is believed to have potentially explosive ramifications, which may explain the long delay. It took two and a half years of investigation before the party's disciplinary commission expelled Mr Chen last September.

He wielded great influence in awarding contracts to foreign developers, offending other party leaders by failing to consult them on the Oriental Plaza project in central Beijing, financed by the Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-hsing.

His son, Chen Xiaotong, was sentenced to 12 years in jail last August, after being found guilty of taking large bribes from foreign contractors in his position as deputy manager of a large Beijing hotel. The son's mistress is said to be on the run with part of the proceeds.

The magazines may be part of an inspired campaign to make sure Mr Chen is not let off lightly. He and his wife occupied several flats in Beijing but otherwise profited less visibly than his subordinates.

Some observers believe the main reason for his downfall was the threat he posed, as party boss in Beijing, to the rise of President Jiang Zemin. Mr Jiang, from Shanghai, had few allies in the capital.

Putting Mr Chen on trial reflects the new emphasis on the "rule of law" being promoted by Mr Jiang.

President Bill Clinton has praised China's willingness to accept United States guidance in developing the rule of law. But Beijing is making it abundantly clear that this does not extend to political tolerance for critics of the regime.

A foreign ministry spokesman at a news conference in Beijing last week condemned "foreigners [who] raise the matter of so-called Chinese dissidents. After investigation, they are actually shown to be criminals."

Five dissidents trying to register an opposition political party are still in detention, according to a Hong Kong human rights group. A group of 79 supporters is said to have signed an open letter to Mr Jiang and Premier Zhu Rongji calling for their release.

Central Asian nations unite by marriage

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

A DYNASTIC marriage worthy of the glory days of medieval Central Asia was sealed in Kyrgyzstan last Sunday between the Kazakh president's daughter, Aliya Nazarbayev, aged 18, and the Kyrgyz president's son, Aidar Akayev, aged 23.

The wedding was described by government officials as a private ceremony. But this did not prevent the presidents of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan from joining the fathers of the bride and groom for the televised festivities after a regional summit that was held in Kyrgyzstan last week.

The couple had a courtship that can only be described as perfunctory. Engaged in March after Aidar's parents went to Kazakhstan to offer their future daughter-in-law a pair of traditional earrings and set a date for the wedding, both have continued their studies at separate universities in the United States. After a two-week honeymoon the couple will return separately to university.

Before Central Asia was incorporated into the Soviet Union in the 1920s, dynastic weddings in the region were a common way to settle feuds among rival clans.

Relations between President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan are already good. Both men are former Communist party henchmen of the Soviet era whose rough-arm tactics with the opposition have left them with unrivalled power and, in Mr Nazarbayev's case, fabulous wealth. Kazakhstan is much bigger and richer than Kyrgyzstan.

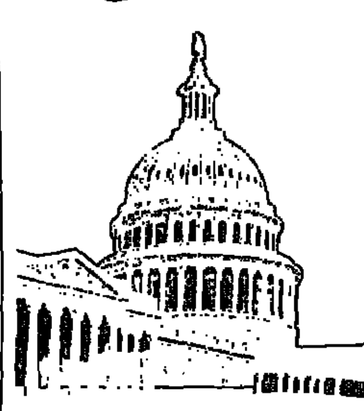
Thanks to its huge reserves of oil, gas and minerals, it has become Central Asia's de facto leader to which all its neighbours must appeal for a share of its considerable spoils.

"This will have a very positive psychological effect on the two nations," the Kyrgyz state secretary, Ishenbai Abdurazakov, said.

Bizarrely, given that the match has strong overtones of a stitch-up between two old political warhorses, Mr Abdurazakov added: "But please do not give this event any political importance."

The groom is following in his father's footsteps. President Akayev also married a Kazakh woman.

Right stumps up in face of recession



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

A FUNNY thing happened on Capitol Hill last week: the Republican Congressional leadership agreed with the Clinton White House on something important. After a while in Washington, one grows used to the fact that almost every issue in American public life — from Monica Lewinsky to the unconscionably hot weather across the South — is bound to become a sectarian party issue in some way. Which was why last week's agreement about Russia was so noticeable, and so significant.

Needless to say, there wasn't complete agreement, and the matter is yet to be settled. Nevertheless the Republicans' shift on the issue of International Monetary Fund aid to Russia and on the future financing of the IMF was substantial and was an indication of the mounting importance of the international financial crisis for US prosperity.

Until now the Republican leadership has been content to ignore the Clinton administration's attempts to increase Washington's payments to the IMF by nearly $18 billion. Trent Lott, the Senate majority leader, and Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, have allowed their conservative allies to block the proposal by their demand for aid to nations with liberal abortion laws to be withheld — a condition that the White House will not accept. The IMF funding request, like the putative settlement of the US's back dues to the United Nations, has been log-jammed for more than a year.

Last week, however, the log-jam began to clear. A Republican-dominated House of Representatives panel voted to approve $3.9 billion to the IMF. Even more significantly, Dick Armey, the Republican majority leader in the House, made a speech on July 15 to the US Chamber of Commerce in which he all but conceded that the rest of the full $18 billion will soon be on its way.

"In the end I suppose they will get about as much money as they are asking for," said Armey, in a remark widely assumed to constitute the end of hostilities on the IMF. Gingrich spoke in similar terms: "A lot of members who were wavering last fall now realise it's very important for us to pass this."

Change is indeed in the air. Armey, in particular, is one of the most incorrigible rightwing critics of the IMF. In recent months he has attacked the IMF's role in the Asian crisis, especially in Indonesia, and Russia. He supported the abortion condition. But now he and many of his conservative colleagues — though not all of them — seem finally to be bending the knee to the sheer force of an argument which says that US politicians cannot afford to stand and watch as the world's financial and trading system comes under increasing strain.

This change of stance, if not of heart, is underlined by a dog that didn't bark on Capitol Hill last week. The Washington Post revealed on July 16 that the World Bank had just suspended three employees at its Washington headquarters under suspicion of taking kickbacks from companies and governments to whom it was awarding project contracts, including deals in Japan, Russia and Indonesia, no less.

Normally, such a revelation at such a time, concerning the three countries most in the spotlight of the international financial crisis, might have been expected to play right into conservative hands. Indeed Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, a notable rightwinger, duly used the news to propose even tighter conditions on attempts to grant a fresh $800 million to the Bank. Yet what was striking was not McConnell's response but the fact that the news from inside the Bank was not used as an excuse to block authorisation of the money to its sister organisation, the IMF.

There are those who believe that they have discerned the one overarching reason for this palpable change in the domestic political context of the Clinton administration's attempts to strengthen the IMF and the Bank. Surprisingly, perhaps, that cause is not so much the threat from the Asian financial crisis, even though so much more notice of that is taken in the US than in Europe. The situation that has made the difference has been the economic crisis in Russia.

THAT crisis, say administration policy makers, has grown much more severe in a matter of weeks, and now threatens not merely the economic stability of Russia but also, more importantly, its political stability. That is why, within a few weeks of the IMF saying that there was no crisis in Russia, IMF officials were back in Moscow this month negotiating $17 billion worth of loans with the Russians.

The Clinton administration has been the driving force behind that change of attitude towards Russia in the IMF, with its officials becoming increasingly anxious about the dangers that were stacking up for Boris Yeltsin's government as the long-running loan negotiations meandered on. The administration's aim was and is to support Yeltsin and his reformist new government, headed by the prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, against their nationalist and communist opponents.

The latest loan to Russia was made following a high level government-to-government appeal from Moscow to Washington, and after Russia's often precarious financial state threatened to capsize catastrophically in late May.

Politically, however, a direct loan from the US to Russia was not an option because of the Republican control of Congress. But an IMF deal was a different matter. Indeed, earlier this month the IMF and the Russians were still talking in terms of a $5.6 billion loan. But another downturn on Russian markets, sucking in the Russian central bank's already diminishing rouble reserves, caused a wholesale increase in the amounts at stake and on offer, and resulted in the July 10 deal.

The effect, in domestic American terms, is one of profound irony. When the world economy started to malfunction in ways which disadvantaged the US, the Clinton administration got absolutely nowhere trying to win Congressional support for limited action. But now that the world economic crisis has got even worse, necessitating much more drastic and far-reaching action from the US, the Congress has begun to fall into line. The threat of global recession has concentrated minds. Yet the outcome would have been both surer and cheaper if the action had been taken a year ago, before the wasted months of conservative posturing.

French World Cup delirium caught in a cycle of despair

EUROPE THIS WEEK
Martin Walker

IT WAS a Scottish manager who admonished fans asserting that football was a matter of life and death by insisting: "It's much more important than that." But Bill Shankly's words might have been echoed this month by sportsmen, media magnates and politicians across Europe. Having attracted the highest fee-per-TV-minute ever charged outside the United States, and finally allowed the European-owned adidas (which sponsored France) to triumph over the US-owned Nike (which sponsored Brazil), the World Cup is widely said to have been a watershed in French and European culture.

It was a deeply European event. Three of the semi-finalists in the championship were France, Holland and Croatia. Brazil, the defeated finalist, is a country that speaks a European language and was a direct product of Europe's colonial surge. Of the 32 World Cup contestants, only South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia can be said to have come to football independent of this colonial tradition, and until China and India and Indonesia get involved, it won't really be a World Cup at all.

If and when they do, perhaps they might dilute that other aspect of the European game — hooliganism. It may have been a British invention, but the Dutch and German and Italian fans have made hooliganism into a genuinely Euro-phenomenon, although let it be said that South America hardly has a clean record either.

The Walker family, which watched most of the games on the big TV at the Café de France in that enchantingly pretty village of Goudargues where the river Cèze starts to wind down to the Rhône, were startled to witness some real French nastiness. A little foreign girl who had the temerity to cheer for Brazil found herself bullied, chased and almost tossed into the local canal by drunken French thugs, adult and adolescent alike.

We have learned something about the new Europe from the Christian Democrat politicians who noted that Helmut Kohl's re-election chances were doomed with Germany's expulsion from the World Cup. A 3-0 defeat by tiny Croatia was a humiliation no national politician could survive. (British people may recall that Harold Wilson always claimed that he lost the 1970 general election for the same reason.)

Similarly, we learned something else about the new Britain from this World Cup. A year ago the national reaction to the death of Princess Diana was seen as an epochal event in British culture, a new and emotional nation imposing itself upon the stiff-upper-lipped custodians of the monarchy. And yet more British people watched England's elimination from the World Cup on TV than watched her funeral. It would be interesting to develop a national grief-ometer to establish which event caused the greater national despair.

Nowhere were the socio-cultural implications of the World Cup followed more closely than in France. They won on July 12, two days before the national birthday that marks the fall of the Bastille in the French Revolution, with a team of that new France which is drawn from Africa and the Arab world, from the Caribbean and the Caucasus.

Uneasy rider . . . Festina's Richard Virenque weeps following the team's expulsion from the Tour de France PHOTO: ERIC GAILLARD

President Jacques Chirac, who attended all the French games, made the entire team into Chevaliers of the Légion d'honneur. "This victory shows solidarity and cohesion," Chirac said. "It shows that France has a soul — or is searching for one. I hope that after this fiesta we will keep something strong from this national feeling. This *tricolore* and multi-colour team has given a beautiful image of France and its humanity."

Certainly Chirac has found a new popularity, with his approval ratings jumping back up to 60 per cent as the feelgood factor of the World Cup made the French feel better about themselves. Even the head of the extreme-right National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who had sneered at the inability of the "recent Frenchmen" to sing the Marseillaise before matches, was inspired to declare that he had always said that France could be "comprised of different races and religions", so long as they were decently patriotic.

But just as France's victorious World Cup footballers were being hailed as symbols of a new post-racist Frenchness forged in the purifying crucible of sport, a more traditional French event was plunging the country into disrepute. The Tour de France, which had been until the explosion of interest in football the classically French sporting obsession, has been racked by a drugs and doping scandal. The front pages of the newspapers barely had time to draw breath from their delirium over the World Cup before they were dominated by L'Affaire Doping.

Perhaps it is just as well that one sporting mania has been so swiftly replaced by another. It is a curious fact that winning the World Cup is not necessarily a sign that the victorious nation will follow the euphoria of victory with great success. England's 1966 World Cup success was followed within the year by a devaluation of the pound and a period of relative decline. Germany's 1990 victory, so sweet in the aftermath of re-unification, launched that country into its most difficult post-war decade, with unemployment at its highest point since the great depression. Brazil, four times winners, have hardly been models of prosperity and good governance.

On these precedents, France should enjoy the elation but not expect too many fundamental changes. Zinedine Zidane, whose two goals in the final ensured the victory, may have discomforted Le Pen because of his Algerian roots, but the Marseille council flats of La Castellane where Zidane grew up remain a ghetto and a slum. The former prime minister Edouard Balladur is still trying to revive the fortunes of French conservatism by stealing Le Pen's clothes and advocating a new social policy of "Frenchmen first". From the days of Athens and Sparta, those who think sport can work a miracle on politics have been disappointed.

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Cup of joy, page 23

Women raped for 'crime' of being Chinese

John Aglionby in Medan

LISA'S relatives are amazed she is still alive. On June 18, a week after her ninth birthday, this Chinese-Indonesian girl who lives 30km outside the north Sumatran city of Medan chose to walk home from school alone rather than wait for her elder sister Martha.

She never made it. Less than 400m from her house a man on a motorbike stopped and offered Lisa a lift. She accepted but the man, named Yudi, drove straight past her house without stopping. He took her instead to a nearby sugarcane field and raped her before taking her back to his house 80km away.

There, with the knowledge of his wife and three children, he kept Lisa incarcerated for six days. "Lisa does not remember being raped again but she said Yudi drugged her seven times during that time and on each occasion she woke up in great pain," Lisa's mother Ekki said. "We are sure she was raped again and again."

Early on June 24 Yudi returned Lisa to her home. She spent the next 10 days in hospital. Even though she led the police to Yudi's house, she is afraid to go home and is staying with friends, along with her mother and two sisters.

Martha said Lisa's ordeal was not an isolated case. "Hundreds of Chinese women have been raped or assaulted around here since May and the rapes are still going on." Only a couple of days before, a 56-year-old Chinese woman had been raped.

The sexual terrorism of the Chinese community in and around Indonesia's third-largest city began in May when riots broke out after several protests against the then president, Suharto.

While the lootings and burnings of Chinese properties stopped after a week, the rape of women of the minority that is hated and envied for its economic success has continued. Yet only five women have reported being raped or sexually assaulted.

Sabaruddin, the head of the Medan branch of the Indonesian Advocacy Association, said there were three reasons why more people had not come forward. "They are too shy because of the stigma; they don't know where to report, because they don't trust the police . . . and they are afraid of being terrorised again."

Another reason why more people are not campaigning to end the atrocities is that, unlike in Jakarta where many women were raped and killed in riots in May, only one rape-linked death has been confirmed in Medan.

"She was a 17-year-old schoolgirl who was kidnapped in a taxi while going home with a friend," said a Chinese woman who asked to remain anonymous. "The friend managed to escape but this other girl was taken away." She was found unconscious a few days later, her body covered in Arabic graffiti and her vagina full of broken glass and nails. She was so badly injured and so badly traumatised her mother asked the doctors to end her life."

Four other Chinese women have moved into the same house as Ekki and her daughters. They rarely go out and never alone. The front door is locked and protected by metal grilles. Few Chinese women are seen on the streets.

The police have formed a team to investigate the rapes but no one in the Chinese community expects results. "Even though we knew where Yudi lived, we had to go to the police twice and pay them before they acted," said Yusuf Suci, a businessman friend of Lisa's family.

World Bank calls in fraud team

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE head of the World Bank has hired a team of investigators to examine allegations of corruption and embezzlement against bank officials in Washington.

James Wolfensohn has confirmed that he has established a special internal fraud team to look into the allegations, and that accountants PricewaterhouseCoopers are among three outside teams now combing some of the bank's books.

Among the projects under scrutiny are World Bank-funded schemes in Russia, Japan and Indonesia, countries at the centre of the international financial crisis.

Two unnamed individuals have been notified that they are under suspicion. A third, a former World Bank official named Fritz Rodriguez, is being sued by the bank in connection with a water utility project in Algeria.

The Australian-born Mr Wolfensohn has built a reputation as a scourge of corrupt dealings since he became the bank's president in 1995. He said last week that the inquiries had started because "if the bank were going to campaign against corruption in our borrowing countries, we had to be absolutely certain that we held ourselves to the highest standards on the inside".

The World Bank is an agency of the United Nations that lends money to governments and to private bodies for development projects. It gets its money from loans from more than 180 UN member states and by borrowing on the money markets. Its current annual spending totals $25 billion.

In a statement Mr Wolfensohn said: "While I have no reason to believe there is a widespread problem in the bank, even one case is one too many." Law suits could result from the investigations, he said.

"The question is, 'Are we clean?' and it's not clear," said the bank's vice-president for external affairs, Mark Malloch Brown. "There are a number of ongoing investigations where there is alarming information on the face of it, and it needs full investigation."

Ulster still plagued by punishment beatings

John Mullin

THEY came for Andy Kearney soon after midnight. He was lying on his bed, wearing only his football shorts and cuddling his two-week-old daughter, Caitlin, to his chest.

There were eight of them, all masked. They were smashing down the front door of the eighth-floor two-bedroom flat in north Belfast when Lisa Darragh, aged 25, his girlfriend, went to answer. They burst in.

They coshed Mr Kearney, aged 33, on the side of the head with a gun butt and drugged him with chloroform. He was unconscious as they tied his hands and dragged him into the lift. There they shot him three times, once behind each knee and once in the ankle.

They left Mr Kearney, who also had three young daughters by his estranged wife, with a severed artery. He might have lived, but his killers had ripped out the phone. In the Fianna House tower block in the republican New Lodge area, Ms Darragh's attempts to rouse neighbours were in vain.

They had even jammed open the lift doors on the ground floor, making it impossible to use. She had to run down the eight flights of stairs, carrying Caitlin with her, to raise the alarm.

Maureen Kearney, the victim's mother, who has five other children, was watching television at home in Twinbrook, west Belfast, when the phone call came. She suffered an angina attack and was rushed to hospital.

Mr Kearney, a labourer, received his first death threats last year and was still looking over his shoulder. The killers came from Direct Action Against Drugs, a cover name for the IRA during the ceasefire.

DAAD killed nine people during the first IRA cessation. Its murder six months ago of Brendan Campbell, aged 33, led to Sinn Fein's temporary exclusion from the multi-party political talks.

Police said there was no evidence whatsoever linking Mr Kearney to drugs. He had no recent convictions, nor had he links to any paramilitary organisation.

Superintendent Roger Maxwell blamed republican terrorists. "This is a cold-blooded murder, and it will be investigated as such," he said.

Sinn Fein's position in Northern Ireland's power-sharing executive is now threatened.

Mr Kearney was involved in a fight two years ago with a man alleged to have links to the IRA. He is understood to have accused the man of assaulting a woman. They clashed again this month in a pub on the Falls Road.

Mrs Kearney, a proud republican, blamed the IRA. "I defy the IRA to come and tell me, 'It wasn't us'," she said. "These people are going about settling personal vendettas. I hate them. I never thought I would ever say that. I hope the bitterness leaves me one day. But I will never forgive them. When they told me he was dead, part of me died too."

Punishment beatings and shootings have continued apace this year, a rarely reported continuing aspect of the Troubles. At least 60 have been recorded.



John Dillon, the stepfather of the three Quinn brothers who were killed in an arson attack two weeks ago, is unable to control his grief as he carries one of the boys' coffins at their funeral PHOTO PAUL FAITH

Dismay takes hold of Orange Order

DIVISIONS in the Orange Order deepened last week after senior members resigned and fields around Drumcree remained deserted, *writes John Mullin.*

Robert Boyd, county grand chaplain of Tyrone, confirmed that several of his colleagues had resigned and added that more would probably follow. He had "serious doubts" about his own position, he said.

The crisis prompted Dennis Watson, County Armagh grand master, to appeal to Orangemen not to desert. He said the tragic events of the past few weeks were all the more reason to carry on with the protests.

But the security forces, confident that the stand-off is all but over, have dismantled part of the barricades erected to keep the Orangemen back from the Catholic Garvaghy Road at the height of the protest.

Latest estimates show that the Drumcree crisis could drain as much as £100 million from the Northern Ireland economy in direct costs and lost revenue.

As the Orangemen considered the future of any further protest last weekend, rain fell on empty fields around Drumcree parish church, making them even more inhospitable as a protest site. A comeback seemed unlikely even though the massive security barrier was still daubed with graffiti and Union flag stripes.

"The last couple of weeks haven't helped our cause, but that is more reason why we have to continue to speak to people in authority to show them why we are right," Mr Watson said.

Child deportees may win apology

Lucy Ward

THE Government will consider issuing an apology to more than 100,000 people sent from Britain as children to orphanages in former colonies, the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, pledged last week.

He also pledged to seek help with benefits and legal aid for those adults deported from orphanages and children's homes, mainly to Australia and New Zealand, under a forced emigration scheme sanctioned by the Government after the second world war.

Mr Dobson gave his assurances to the Commons health select committee, which is investigating the fate of the so-called child migrants and examining ways in which they can be offered recompense.

Charities, including Barnardo's, acted as agencies shipping off more than 100,000 children, often without their parents' knowledge. The scheme, which ended only in 1967, was intended to give them a chance of a better life, but a further motive was the desire to populate the Commonwealth with "pure white stock".

Mr Dobson acknowledged that the Government should help the migrants, many of whom were given new names and denied details of their birth parents.

He said: "Where it comes to people who were in effect press-ganged as children to be taken to another country, and where they have difficulty finding out about who they were and who their parents were and how all this came to be, I think we do have an obligation."

That obligation would involve working with overseas governments in receiving countries, the agencies that sent children abroad, and those that received them, he told the committee.

Told by the Labour MP Ann Keen that many child migrants were "looking for an apology from the British government for their role in this whole scandal", Mr Dobson promised: "I rule nothing out."

MPs are also pressing for an investigation of whether the Government provided money to maintain children in overseas institutions. Many of those sent to children's homes run by organisations including the Roman Catholic Christian Brothers have spoken of severe physical and mental abuse by those charged with their care.

Lords accept deal on fees

Anne Perkins

AN 11th-hour compromise over tuition fees in Scotland was cobbled together between Opposition peers and the Government last week, averting a constitutional crisis as the Lords attempted to thwart the Commons.

Liberal Democrats and Tories dropped their opposition to the Government's plans to impose fees for the fourth year of a Scottish degree course on *all* but Scottish students. They were responding to the Government's commitment to an independent commission to review the fees' impact, to be set up within six months of the bill becoming law and to report by April 2000.

Both sides claimed victory. Lord Mackay of Ardbrecknish insisted the Government would backtrack: "The issue now goes to an independent commission where all the bodies from the education world will give evidence against the Government's proposals," he predicted. "I am confident the commission will have to conclude that this is a daft anomaly."

Lady Blackstone, the higher education minister, welcomed the end of "the everlasting ping pong" as the bill finally headed for the statute book after being rejected three times by peers. Earlier this month peers voted by the biggest majority against a government since 1913 to entitle all students at Scottish universities to receive tuition fees for the full four years.

But in the Commons last week, the Government again rejected the move. The Education Secretary, David Blunkett, said he regarded the question as a constitutional issue, which the elected Commons must win over the unelected peers.

Police patrols may go private

Alan Travis

PRIVATE security guards patrolling Britain's streets will soon be a common sight, under plans being drawn up by chief constables.

The prospect that the public's traditional demand for more bobbies on the beat will more likely be met by a Rentokil guard than a uniformed constable was raised last week by Ian Blair, Chief Constable of Surrey. He told the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) that it should drop its opposition to private security companies patrolling public spaces and instead get involved in licensing and organising the growing army of "parapolice" in shopping centres and private estates.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said the plans were "a real possibility" as private security companies were already providing town centre guards, park patrols and nightclub bouncers. The current unregulated situation was not satisfactory.

"If you talk to the public they understand that you cannot have a police officer walking up and down their street all day and every day. You never had that. That was a myth about what happened in some golden age."

He said the plan was for the police to discuss, and not something for government prescription. But even if police numbers were doubled they alone could never satisfy the demand for visible street patrols. Private security guards would not replace existing police patrols but would provide additional reassurance for the public.

Mr Blair's idea won support from several chief constables, but some senior officers expressed concerns that the scheme could lead to the end of the bobby on the beat and leave patrols available only in areas that could afford them.

The proposals are to be discussed by chief police officers this autumn. Backing the idea would involve a sharp U-turn for Acpo, which three years ago became so concerned about the criminal backgrounds of private security operators that it pressed the Tories for state regulation. Legislation is expected soon.

Mr Blair told delegates there were already 50,000 private security guards in Britain, and private guards or local authority patrols operated in more than half the force areas in England and Wales.

He said the police faced the risk of becoming merely an emergency response and law enforcement service. The past 50 years had seen them steadily lose "market share", whether it was guarding cash in transit, stewarding football matches or escorting prisoners. It was time for the police to abandon their 100 year-old monopoly on patrolling and accept that few officers actually went out on the beat.

● Sick leave costs the Metropolitan police more than £96 million a year, according to an investigation by the House of Commons public accounts committee.

In Brief

THE Commons Standards and Privileges Committee cleared the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, of breaching parliamentary rules by not declaring payments from companies owned by Robert Maxwell, the disgraced media tycoon.

DEREK Bentley, who was hanged 45 years ago for his part in the murder of a policeman, was convicted on "highly suspect" evidence and subjected to a grossly unfair trial, the Appeal Court was told.

Comment, page 12

A MAN, aged 23, has been charged with the murders of the young Quinn brothers in a firebomb attack on their home in Ballymoney, Co Antrim.

THE Chancellor, Gordon Brown, flew to Idaho to tell executives from Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation that Labour would not be bullied into softening its commitment to join the single European currency when the time was right — if it was in Britain's best interests.

ALL blood donations will be subjected to expensive filter treatment in future to reduce the risk of patients contracting the human form of BSE.

ONE in three of the Conservative party's 220 staff are expected to be sacked in the next few weeks as part of a streamlining of the organisation to get rid of almost anybody who is more than 50 years old.

TWO lobbying firms — GPC Market Access and GJW — at the centre of the "cash for access" row have been asked to withdraw from their trade association, pending an investigation.

SIMON MAKALLAH, an assistant director of the Kenya Wildlife Service, has been charged with the murder of Julie Ward in the Masai Mara game park in September 1988.

PADDY ASHDOWN, the Liberal Democrat leader, has urged the European Union to match its powerful new economic structure with a written constitution that provides a democratically accountable political counterweight.

Comment, page 12

BLACK women have overtaken black men and white women in the pay stakes, according to figures from the Employment Policy Institute, but overall ethnic minorities are less likely to be employed and earn less than white counterparts.

SIR RICHARD Eyre has called for the Royal Opera House to be closed and a new organisation built from scratch should it fail to implement the changes demanded in his report.

Prescott heralds transport revolution

Keith Harper and Paul Brown

THE most radical change in transport policy since motorways were invented was this week unveiled by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott — but legislation to implement the changes will have to wait at least two years.

An enthusiastic Mr Prescott, who has endured months of cabinet wrangling over the contents of his much-delayed White Paper, declared: "After 20 years in the wilderness, this is the day transport policy bursts into the light of a new dawn. There is a clear mood for change, and I am in a mood to deliver it."

The thrust is to tax congestion through toll and company car park charges, diverting the proceeds into public transport. Its aim is to persuade one in 10 car users to give up their vehicles, and the rest to use public transport more often.

But the main planks of the strategy require legislation, and there are no firm dates in the White Paper for their implementation.

New taxes, expected to raise £1 billion by 2005, and a new strategic rail authority that would impose tougher regulations are Mr Prescott's most important targets. But he admitted that they would have to take their place in the crowded legislative programme.

Mr Prescott wanted quicker action but has been held back by Tony Blair, who feared a backlash from middle England's two-car families. The new taxes are therefore unlikely to bite until after the general election in 2002.

However, the White Paper met widespread acclaim. The Confederation of British Industry said it was a step in the right direction but action was needed to get results. It feared the parking tax was "a blunt instrument". Even the motoring organisations praised Mr Prescott, though the RAC said the Government must "mind the gap between vision and reality".

Bus and light rail operators were ecstatic. But among many interest groups there were fears that the programme would be delayed through lack of early legislation. Stephen Joseph, director of the environmental group Transport 2000, welcomed the White Paper but said: "We would like Mr Prescott to go further and faster, with more carrots and sticks to cut the traffic.

"The good ideas are already out there — green commuter plans, home deliveries from shops, quality bus and rail services, safe routes to school, low-speed zones. We are disappointed that the big out-of-town supermarkets are not to face any car parking charges and will therefore continue to undermine town centres."

Tony Juniper, campaigns director of Friends of the Earth, said: "Transport policy has turned an important corner. Radical change is coming. The acid test will come when you compare the number of those travelling alone in company cars in three years' time with now. Prescott had pulled off a coup to get these policies through against the doubters in No 10 and the outrage from the powerful motoring lobby."

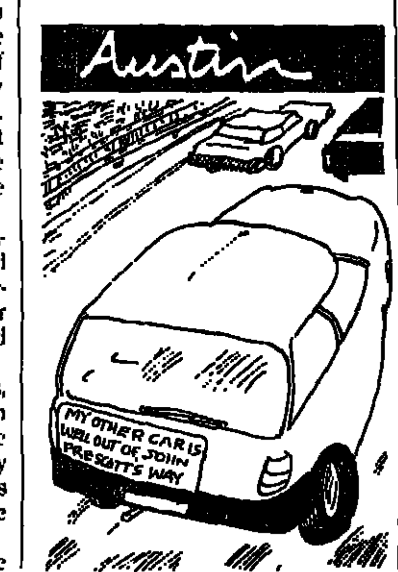
Gillian Shephard, the Conservatives' transport spokeswoman, said it was "jams today and taxes tomorrow. There will be extra taxes for road users, more regulation and bureaucracy."

For the Liberal Democrats, Matthew Taylor said it was "long on words but short on actions . . . He has failed to change the company car tax system, which means gas guzzlers will continue to gain at the expense of public transport users."

Ben Plowden, director of the Pedestrians' Association, said: "Britain's 50 million pedestrians will thank Mr Prescott for recognising their interests for the first time. The test will be whether and how quickly its warm words are turned into more crossings, better pavements, pedestrian areas and safer routes to school."

The backbone of the Government's new strategy is the establishment of an integrated transport network which will reduce congestion and encourage public transport use by ensuring that all the various elements operate as cogs in a larger wheel rather than as separate and competing enterprises.

A key element in achieving this will be the introduction of local transport plans, which will require local authorities outside London to deliver five-year strategies to meet transport needs after consultation with residents, business and transport operators. In London, transport integration will be a central role for the new directly-elected mayor.



The plans will cover all forms of transport and include local targets for improving air quality, road safety, public transport and traffic reduction.

To improve passenger information and allow easier planning, the Government is to introduce a one-stop service offering timetable and route details across all forms of transport. The service will be available by telephone, teletext and the Internet.

The key aim of the integrated policy is to tackle congestion and pollution by convincing people to leave their cars at home. Improved public transport and traffic management can achieve this only in part, so measures will be introduced requiring motorists to pay for the privilege of using their car. As well as reducing congestion and benefiting cyclists and pedestrians, the charges will provide a guaranteed income for councils to improve public transport systems in their area.

To encourage commuting, there will also be a crackdown on free workplace parking, which ministers believe is responsible for a significant proportion of rush-hour congestion. Local authorities will be given the power to levy a new workplace parking charge, which may require businesses to apply for a licence to allow a certain number of vehicles to be parked on site.

While recognising parents' concerns about the safety of their children, the Government hopes to reduce morning rush-hour congestion by discouraging the school run. The need for parents to drive their children to school will be reduced by a series of measures, including safer routes for walking and cycling and giving greater priority to public transport.

Comment, page 12

Environment chief in row over links with Monsanto

Nick Hopkins

CAMPAIGNERS against genetically-modified (GM) crops reacted angrily this week after it emerged that the chairman of the Environment Agency is growing GM sugar-beet on his farm.

Lord de Ramsey has agreed to let Monsanto, one of the world's largest agricultural biotechnology companies, to test the crop on a small plot at his 6,500-acre estate in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

He is chairman of a government-funded body whose remit is to "encourage the conservation of natural resources" and "make a better environment for present and future generations".

Pressure groups, including Friends of the Earth, said they deplored his decision to co-operate with the company and thought he should consider resigning.

The Environment Agency, a quango set up in 1996, said the chairman had not breached any of its rules, but there was anxiety over the revelations. It appears that Lord de Ramsey did not tell anyone at the agency of his plans.

The agency insisted it does not have any direct regulatory involvement with GM crops, and is in favour of tests to determine whether they are safe. "We are not giving our full-hearted support to GM crops, and we share some of the concerns of green pressure groups. But we do support trials which will help us see if these crops can be of real value. People tend to forget that there are potential benefits to GM crops," said a spokesman. "We don't believe there is a conflict of interest."

Monsanto hopes to persuade the Government to allow the commercial growing of GM crops within two years. Meanwhile the company has bought Plant Breeding International Cambridge for £320 million from Unilever.

PBIC was bought by Unilever from the Government for £66 million in 1987. It was formed by merging the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Seed Development Organisation. Its speciality is developing new strains of seeds for crops — such as wheat, barley, potatoes and peas — which are particularly resistant to poor weather and crop disease. It uses mainly conventional techniques, although it also possesses a biotechnology capability.

Monsanto is a highly acquisitive life sciences and biotechnology group with three main areas of activity: agriculture, pharmaceuticals — mainly in its Searle division — and the production of food ingredients such as NutraSweet.

Call for a national register as childminder jailed for murder

Sarah Hall and Ewen MacAskill

THE Government moved a step closer to creating a national register for childminders this week after a woman, who hid her past as a prostitute with three children taken into care or adopted, was jailed for life for murdering five-month-old Joseph Mackin.

The Social Security Secretary, Harriet Harman, and other ministers are pressing for proper regulation as a matter of urgency. Ms Harman said on Monday: "We will have to address the failure of the regulatory system to ensure that it is robust enough."

Convicting Helen Stacey, aged 41, at Norwich crown court, Mr Justice Blofeld called for a "searching inquiry" into how she had been able to conceal her string of convictions for soliciting, her depressive illnesses, and the fact that three of her four children had been taken into care or adopted as infants.

Norfolk social services insisted it had carried out a detailed review of Stacey's registration — but admitted that the checks had failed because she had lied on her application form by failing to disclose her previous married name and stating that she was not on drugs.

Joseph's parents, Tony and Corinn Mackin, said in a statement: "We do not want Joseph to have died in vain and will therefore continue in our efforts to establish whether adequate checks were undertaken by the authorities on Helen Stacey's registration as a childminder."

The jury returned a majority verdict of 10-2 that Stacey had murdered Joseph by shaking him vigorously in a flash of temper. Severe head injuries were inflicted in "a classic case of shaken baby syndrome". The court heard how Joseph, a "happy, smiley boy", had been killed on May 13, 1997, after Stacey shook him "backwards and forwards as hard as possible".

At 7am, when Mr Mackin left him and his two-year-old sister Samantha at the childminder's, the baby was his usual self. But by 5.15pm, when he returned, Joseph was "floppy like a rag doll" and on the point of death. He died in hospital shortly afterwards.

Stacey, who vehemently denied shaking him, maintained the baby had been "grizzly" all day, with her defence arguing the injuries could have been sustained before Joseph was in her care.

Calling for an inquiry, the judge said: "We all know there are many many public-spirited childminders who do a most marvellous job, but none of us wants to see a situation where the public loses confidence."

Brown unveils £56bn spending plan

Guardian Reporters

THE Chancellor, Gordon Brown, last week mapped out Labour's strategy for winning a second full term in power when he unveiled a £56 billion increase in public expenditure on voter-friendly services such as health and education over the next three years.

Mr Brown delighted Labour MPs and stunned the Conservative benches as he trumped heavily trailed predictions of a financial bonanza for schools, further education and hospitals with the announcement that health and education will share a cumulative £40 billion.

Although heavily dependent upon the economy avoiding a grinding recession over the next two years — and on continued public sector pay restraint — the bigger-than-expected boost to schools and hospitals will enable the Government to meet last year's manifesto commitments to Middle England by the time of the next election in 2001/2.

It was buttressed by £2.5 billion aimed at a guaranteed minimum income for poor pensioners. They will also get help with winter fuel bills and transport costs; free eye tests will also be restored.

In a further gesture to Labour's traditionalists, there will also be more money for run-down estates, the arts and overseas aid. But Mr Brown gave parallel assurances to the City that Labour is keeping a tight grip on tax-and-spend to avoid further, damaging interest rate rises.

In headline terms it means that Frank Dobson's Department of Health will get a cumulative £21 billion extra by the year 2001/2 — an average 4.7 per cent real growth over three years, 3.7 per cent over the current Parliament, compared with 3 per cent in 1992-97.

Tories and Liberal Democrats said that Mr Brown's "double accounting" will really be an extra £8.6 billion a year, just enough to allow the health service to "stand still".

David Blunkett's education and employment budget will rise by £19 billion as a result of the Treasury's year-long Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Though twice the real-terms increase in the last Parliament — 3 per cent against 1.4 — it is back end-loaded, with most money, an extra £3.3 billion, coming in election year.



In a sweeping overhaul which restructures Whitehall's current and capital spending, the CSR will see Whitehall departments get their budgets set for three years in return for tightly monitored progress on efficiency and the delivery of "front-line services" in hospital wards and school classrooms.

"That is what we mean by education, education, education. Honouring our commitment to the British people," Mr Brown told the Commons in an echo of Tony Blair's pre-election pledges.

Debt repayment alone is saving the Government £5 billion a year in interest charges, and further sales of public assets will raise £11 billion.

Transport, law and order, and local government — including housing — are among the winners. Social security spending will also continue to rise, albeit at a slower rate than under the Tories — 2.1 per cent against 3.8 per cent.

The Shadow Chancellor, Francis Maude, welcomed extra money for public services, but warned: "The Chancellor has confirmed today why Labour has already raised taxes 17 times, why families are already £1,000-a-year worse off — and it is because Labour cannot control public spending."

The day after the announcement, Mr Blunkett announced a rapid expansion of free nursery education for three-year-olds as one of the big dividends from the CSR.

He promised to fund 190,000 extra places in nurseries and playgroups to increase the proportion of three-year-olds in education, from 34 per cent to 66 per cent. "Nursery education is the foundation of later educational success," he told MPs.

The Labour manifesto promised pre-school education for all four-year-olds, and ministers undertook to achieve this by the start of the next school year in September. The manifesto commitment to education for three-year-olds was more vague and is now being implemented faster than expected.

Mr Blunkett assured teachers that there would be "no pay freeze". Their independent pay review body would have to pay attention to problems of recruitment and motivation in the profession as well as the Chancellor's guidelines on restraint.

Mr Blunkett also said there would be several hundred million pounds available on top of the normal annual pay rounds for distribution according to merit, starting in 2000/1.

Meanwhile Mr Dobson promised that the health service would recruit up to 7,000 more doctors and 15,000 more nurses before the next election. He also announced an extra 6,000 nurse training places and foreshadowed a "large" increase in places in medical schools.

But Christine Hancock, general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, said: "Where are these nurses going to come from if we don't tackle pay?"

Highlights

Health spending to increase by a total £21 billion over three years. Next year it will rise by 5.7 per cent in real, inflation-adjusted, terms and by 4.5 per cent in 2000. An £8 billion investment in new hospitals, clinics and doctor's surgeries.

Education to receive an extra £19 billion over the next three years, £3 billion next year, £6 billion in 2000 and £10 billion in 2001, a real-terms average increase of 5.1 per cent a year. Free nursery education for three-year-olds and focus on teacher training and recruitment.

Transport boosted by £1.7 billion over the next three years to modernise the road and rail network.

Science to get an extra £1.1 billion, including £400 million from the Wellcome Foundation, to provide modern facilities for research and teaching.

Regeneration — £4.4 billion more on cities and housing, split between £3.6 billion on renewing housing stock and £800 million on a New Deal for communities.

Museums, the arts and sport to get £290 million extra over three years, a real increase of 5.5 per cent.

World Service Foreign Office support to rise by £44 million between now and the end of the Parliament.

Overseas aid to increase from the low of 0.25 per cent of national income to 0.3 per cent.

Pensioners get a guaranteed minimum income, free eye tests and more help with transport costs.

Debt interest payments to be £5 billion a year lower by 2000/1.

Efficiency targets — Government departments to have targets from 3 to 10 per cent.

Pay — public sector pay review bodies forced to take account of departmental spending limits and the Government's inflation and efficiency targets.

Long slog to the election begins

COMMENT
Larry Elliott

LABOUR ministers have been saying for 14 months that publication of the prosaically titled Comprehensive Spending Review would be a defining moment in the Blair government's first term. And so it proved.

It was not just that the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, unveiled much larger than expected increases in health and education, but that the announcement began the long, slow slog to the next general election.

The statement provided a break with the past in four significant ways. First, Labour has for once managed to align spending with the political cycle. In previous parliaments, the party has been guilty of spending heavily in the first two years and then being forced into cuts as polling day has loomed.

Mr Brown has kept a tight rein on public spending in the first two years in a bid to show that Labour is no longer in the business — as one aide put it — of bunging money at the public sector. The Chancellor, in one of his favourite phrases, calls it "prudence with a purpose".

The Conservatives seemed unsure as to whether they should attack Mr Brown for spending too much or too little, attempting to claim both that Labour was on a spending binge and that the increases in health and education were not all that impressive. Politically, the package is everything voters could have wished for: higher spending on their priorities without the need for higher taxation to pay for them. Middle England will love it.

Second, it was clear that this was a government with a real commitment to the public sector whereas the Conservatives always gave the impression that public expenditure was a necessary evil. Ministers rarely used state schools or the health service.

It is important not to get carried away, however. In the last year of the Callaghan government, 5.4 per cent of national income was devoted to education. In David Blunkett's first year, this fell to 4.6 per cent of GDP and even the extra £19 billion over three years will only take the figure up to 5 per cent of GDP.

Moreover the additional £21 billion for health has to be seen in the context of the tough settlements in 1997-8 and 1998-9. Over the whole Parliament, the Government will be spending around 3.7 per cent more per year in real terms, against a Conservative record of 3.1 per cent between 1979 and 1997.

Third, Labour's proposals have the impression of being well thought out. Problems have been identified and solutions proposed for dealing with them that suggest a new approach at work. The £800 million earmarked for the New Deal for Communities, for example, is a smart use of public money, designed to end the piecemeal approach to the regeneration of some of Britain's most deprived estates.

Finally, and with one important caveat, the plans look affordable. Current spending will go up by 2.25 per cent a year for the next three years, with a doubling of investment spending taking the total up to around 2.8 per cent a year.

Given that spending was flat in the first two years of the Parliament, this is hardly profligate, and indeed not that different from the record of the Tories from 1979-97. There is no real reason why the Bank of England's monetary policy committee should take fright at the plans and use them as an excuse to push up interest rates.

Extra spending on the infrastructure will be financed by the £11 billion sale of unwanted assets, while the improvement in the Government's finances should, according to the Treasury, reduce debt interest payments by £5 billion by the end of the Parliament.

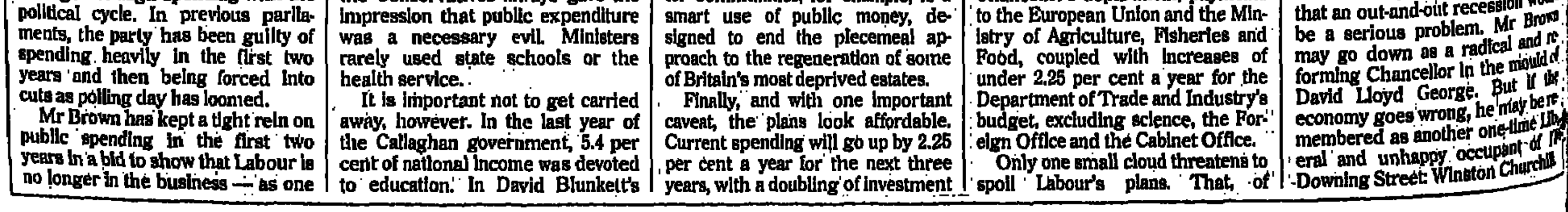
The other way in which the hefty increases for health and education have been financed is through real reductions in defence, the Lord Chancellor's department, payments to the European Union and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, coupled with increases of under 2.25 per cent a year for the Department of Trade and Industry's budget, excluding science, the Foreign Office and the Cabinet Office.

Only one small cloud threatens to spoil Labour's plans. That, of course, is the risk the Government runs of the economy unravelling over the next 18 months.

If there should be a recession, or even a long growth pause, some of the arithmetic would start to look dubious. Debt interest payments would shoot up, while Mr Blair would find that unemployment would lead to pressure on the social security budget and yield lower tax receipts. The choice then would be to scale back the spending increases or find another way of financing them — either through higher borrowing or from higher taxation.

The Government's strong fiscal position means that it does have a buffer against recession. Treasury sources said there was £12 billion of slack in the public finances that could be used to smooth out the economic cycle.

That said, however, they admit that an out-and-out recession would be a serious problem. Mr Brown may go down as a radical and reforming Chancellor in the mould of David Lloyd George. But if the economy goes wrong, he may be remembered as another one-time Liberal and unhappy occupant of No 11 Downing Street: Winston Churchill.



Britain's highest court to swing to the right

Clare Dyer

TWO law lords on the moderate wing are to be replaced by more conservative judges in a move that will swing Britain's highest court to the right, just as it gears up to take on a politically sensitive role under the new Human Rights Act.

Sir Peter Millett, thought to be the highest ranking Freemason in the judiciary, and Sir John Hobhouse will replace Lord Justices Goff and Nolan who are retiring in October.

The changeover means that the replacement of Conservative-appointed moderates by less radical ones appointed by Labour. Appointments are the choice of the Prime Minister, although Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, will have played a decisive role.

A third replacement among the 12 law lords is expected later this year when Lord Justice Phillips, now conducting the BSE inquiry, is tipped to take over from Lord Lloyd, one of the most conservative law lords.

Many of the 100 or so cases a year which reach the lords, the highest appellate court, deal with knotty technical problems involving commercial law. But this will change when the Human Rights Bill, which incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into British law, comes into force. The court will become more like the US Supreme Court, deciding fundamental issues on the rights of the individual versus the state which now go to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. These will include issues such as privacy and the right to life.

The three new law lords are commercial lawyers by background, with little experience of human rights issues. A leading academic lawyer said of Hobhouse and Millett: "They haven't had much experience of the rights of the individual against the state. When they have come across these issues, they have shown themselves to be on the side of the state rather than the individual."

One QC said: "All three are really commercial lawyers. They are very odd people to be in a supreme court dealing with human rights."

Lord Mackay, Lord Chancellor under the last Conservative government, opposed incorporation of the convention into domestic law largely because it would politicise the judges. He warned that judges' political opinions would have to come under scrutiny in the appointments system once they became the guardians of human rights.

For a number of years it was Labour's policy to set up a Judicial Appointments Commission, in which lay people would have helped in the selection of judges. But this proposal was omitted from the manifesto and was officially dropped by Lord Irvine last October.

In the United States the track records and views of potential appointees to the Supreme Court are openly scrutinised. However, Lord Irvine has refused to consider changes in the British judicial appointments system, and new law lords still emerge in the traditional way, unknown quantities to the public despite the radical change their role is about to undergo.

They are drawn from a narrow group, the 35 Appeal Court judges. Most have backgrounds in commercial law, and other areas where private interests predominate, rather than in public law.

Safeguards 'undermine' rape trials

Grania Langdon-Down and Clare Dyer

A SENIOR judge who plays a key role in training and advising rape trial judges has warned that Home Office proposals to safeguard vulnerable witnesses risk undermining defendants' rights.

Lord Justice Judge, an appeal court judge, said he feared plans for extra protection for witnesses took too little account of the defendant's position.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, intends to include measures in a criminal justice bill in the autumn to ban rape defendants from cross-examining their alleged victims personally, and to restrict the circumstances in which women can be cross-examined on their sexual history.

"The point we have to get across is that whatever provisions are made, we must not increase the risk of an innocent person being convicted," he said. "We must not change the burden of proof and we must not introduce changes for the sake of appearances which damage the fairness of a trial."

A report last month, following a year-long review by government, police and Victim Support representatives, made 78 recommendations to improve the treatment of witnesses in court.

Lord Justice Judge believed the proposal to ban defendants from cross-examining personally in rape trials — a response to two cases where the victims had to undergo hours of prurient cross-examination by their attackers — raised fundamental questions about people's rights as citizens.

"The Court of Appeal has already grasped that nettle. It said judges must stop any questioning which is not relevant and which is deliberately humiliating the complainant, and it will support the decision if the defendant appeals. I would like to see the Court of Appeal guidelines working in practice before any legislation is introduced.

"We have to try to ensure the guilty are convicted, but what we also have to make sure is that the innocent are not."

Women's groups want a complete ban on the use of women's sexual history. Lisa Longstaff of Women Against Rape said: "The problem is the routine abuse of the restrictions on such evidence."

The hole at the heart of Europe

PADDY ASHDOWN, leader of Britain's Liberal Democrats, deserves applause. Last week he managed to pull off what many observers had believed was impossible: he made a fresh contribution to the debate on Europe. In a speech to the Centre for European Reform, he cut through the usual sterilities of Euroscepticism and the equally tired, pro-European metaphors about trains leaving stations. Instead he came up with a bright idea — it was time to draw up a written constitution for Europe.

On his way to reaching that conclusion, he made some sound observations. He noted that the European Union will hardly inspire most Britons so long as their participation in it is argued in the language of "grudging acceptance". Pro-Europeans, he said, "must put the positive case more loudly and more often". He's right. Too much of the UK's European debate has historically gone by default, with enthusiasts arguing their case as a matter of inevitability — with closer union presented as an unavoidable fate rather than a desirable outcome. In this context Mr Ashdown's attack on Labour for being mealy-mouthed on the single currency will strike a chord, and not only with pro-Europeans. Both sides in this most crucial debate should encourage the "declaratory positions" Mr Ashdown hankers after: the alternative is for Britain to make the decision on the euro without a full-blooded debate, merely declaring its verdict on a *fait accompli*.

But the Lib-Dem leader's most urgent point was his call for a written constitution. He has realised that people across Europe are in the dark about an institution increasingly responsible for important decisions affecting their lives. Brussels speaks a language few understand, "that inscrutable, acronym-laden bureaucracy-speak which dominates so much communication in the EU". Mr Ashdown excoriates the EU for its invisibility, citing the Council of Ministers' habit of meeting in secret behind closed doors.

His solutions are, among other things, an assault on "the culture of secrecy", with a demand for a Freedom of Information Charter for all EU bodies as well as additional teeth for the European Parliament, enabling it to hold the overmighty Commission and Council to account. But it is Mr Ashdown's underlying logic that is so appealing. In essence, he is reminding the EU that it is meant to be the servant of the people, not the other way around. He wants to "formulate a constitution for Europe from the bottom up", a radical departure for a body which has long been run as the exclusive preserve of the great European élites.

The advantages are clear. A written, accessible constitution would immediately strip away the mystique of the EU. Most people cannot comb through the sub-clauses of the Treaty of Rome; they deserve to have the rules of this new, semi-government spelled out, in black and white. In an instant the EU would seem less faceless and out of reach, and more like a human-made creation that can be moulded and changed. As Mark Leonard's recent paper for the think-tank Demos showed, most people feel very much part of Europe but not of the EU: a written constitution would help break down that alienation.

All those arguments are sound. So sound, in fact, that they apply just as well to another entity that often seems baffling and obscure to the people it is meant to serve: the British state. Europe needs a written constitution. So does Britain.

Saving the car from itself

JOHN PRESCOTT'S transport White Paper — the first in Britain for 20 years — is a breath of fresh air after the ideology-driven initiatives of the previous government. The Conservatives' idea of strategy didn't extend much beyond ensuring that as many transport activities as possible were privatised, as if this would be the cure-all for the nation's transport problems. One of the strengths of Labour's White Paper is that there are no magic solutions. The way ahead, after wide consultation, is through a large number of initiatives across Britain and with very little extra call on Treasury money. The 170-page document contains practical ideas to reduce congestion and pollution and to conjure an integrated policy (including shifting freight from road to rail).

There are lots of good ideas in the White Paper, which has won broad approval from business lobbies to campaigning pressure groups. Charging for company car parking spaces in inner cities could achieve two things: cut down on unnecessary, polluting car journeys to the office while generating the investment needed to make journeys by rail, bus, Underground, bicycle or walking more attractive. Business is persuaded that if there have to be extra taxes, then hypothecated ones are the way to do it. Further in the future, the Government may introduce electronic traffic tolls for cars entering city centres, thereby assuring more revenue streams protected from the Treasury's grasp. Since most of his big projects like the Channel Tunnel rail link and refurbishment of London's Underground are already off the balance sheet (as far as public borrowing is concerned), it is no wonder Mr Prescott emerged unworried from the parsimony of last week's Spending Review.

The White Paper has confirmed Labour's manifesto plans for a Strategic Rail Authority to inject long-term thinking into privatisation. This is as welcome as the new agreement between the Highways Agency and Railtrack to integrate road and rail networks. Why on earth wasn't such an obvious thing like this done long ago? Plans to make it safer and more attractive to walk or cycle to school could lessen the attractions of a second car (the biggest growth area). This is the first white paper with a strategy for pedestrians, whom it says "are often treated like trespassers in their own towns". It sensibly recognises that central government is the enabler, but local authorities are the deliverers of policies such as reclaiming roads, calming traffic and encouraging cyclists. The Jaguar-driving Prescott insists that he is not anti-car. Like the motoring organisations, he is swimming with the *Zeitgeist* by admitting that the car has to be saved from itself to prevent gridlock.

But can he do it? The White Paper admits that traffic could grow by more than a third over the next 20 years. Will his proposals merely retard that rate of growth or reduce car usage from its present level? Can it be done without addressing out-of-town shopping centres? The answers to these questions depend on how aggressively — and how quickly — the Government implements these proposals. If Mr Prescott can apply the energy and (unusually for a transport minister) the enthusiasm he has so far displayed, he may dispel the cynicism that transport integration has so often generated in the past.

Righting the past

A MATURE society should be able to look back on difficult moments and admit that what seemed right may have been wrong. On this week's showing, Britain is making modest but slow progress. The preliminary inquiry into Bloody Sunday has opened 26 years after 14 men were shot dead by British soldiers in the Bogside. And by a coincidence of the calendar, a new appeal to clear the name of Derek Bentley has also begun before the Court of Appeal: his original trial, conviction and execution took place over 45 years ago.

It would be premature to conclude that Britain is now wholly converted to an open-minded mood of recapitulation when the past can be faced less defensively. The inquiry into Bloody Sunday was announced in January by the Prime Minister after months of intense pressure from Dublin. It was billed at the time as a move "to keep Sinn Fein in the talks": it is certainly hard to imagine any British government authorising it if the peace process were not at stake.

Derek Bentley's case may seem to give a clearer signal. The establishment of the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which referred the Bentley conviction last November to the Court of Appeal, reflected a widespread unease at the growing number of miscarriages of justice exposed in recent years. But this particular case has always been a glaring one where doubts could be entertained even by Michael Howard, who as Home Secretary granted Bentley a limited posthumous pardon.

By another coincidence Myra Hindley was granted legal aid this week to appeal against the decision that she must die in prison. Here is a different issue: there has never been any doubt of her guilt. But it raises a still more difficult question: should the verdict of society prevail over the sentence of the courts? That is one which no government, Tory or Labour, is yet willing even to ask.

Australia's land issue is one big minefield

Martin Woollacott

WHEN historians offer new versions of the past they also create new versions of the future. Rarely has this been so clearly demonstrated as in Australia, where academic work on the relations between white settlers and Aborigines has directly influenced the decisions of the courts, helped shape new legislation, and profoundly altered Australian politics.

The recent passage of a bill amending Aboriginal rights to land, established in theory by earlier High Court decisions, means that these rights will now become, in litigation, in state and federal politics, in commercial strategies, and in public debate, the everyday stuff of Australian life in a way unimaginable 10 years ago. Sadly, they could also deepen the cleavage in Australian society that the emergence of the One Nation party has sharply illuminated.

The change in Australia is grounded in a shift in historical perception. It arises out of the work of scholars who established that what had been seen as a secondary story of scattered violence and inevitable black decline was in fact, as one historian has put it, "a great unbroken arch of systematic brutality". The most characteristically Australian aspect, they suggest, was the total territorial dispossession of the Aborigines. In other countries, the principle of native ownership of the land was at least recognised in treaties, however unequal. But in Australia it was not.

The historian Henry Reynolds, in his most recent book, This Whispering In Our Hearts (Allen & Unwin), quotes from a lecture by a Sydney barrister, Richard Windeyer, in 1842, in which the lawyer demolished the argument that Australian blacks had rights to the land. And yet Windeyer ended by saying: "How is it our minds are not satisfied ... What means this whispering in the bottom of our hearts?" The voice of conscience today is no longer merely whispering.

Reynolds's The Other Side Of The Frontier, published in 1981, had a great impact on educated opinion. His work, with that of others such as Charles Rowley who preceded him, influenced both major legal judgments, in 1992 and 1996, which recognised native title in Australia. Although the judges naturally based their decision on legal principles, they might never have arrived at the view that Australia was not *terra nullius* — nobody's land — when the British arrived, had it not been for the alteration in the intellectual atmosphere.

The campaign for Aboriginal rights in Australia is part of a politics of restitution and redress for past wrongs that in recent years has touched almost all societies. The effects have been diverse and have also reinforced the idea that group rights are sometimes more important than individual rights, a change some welcome and others find questionable, and all find far from easy to work out in practice.

The vote in the Australian Senate settled what has come to be called Wik. The name is that of the Queensland Aboriginal people whose challenge in the High Court led to the judgment that indigenous rights, first recognised in 1992, extended not only to vacant Crown land in Australia, most of which was desert, but to pastoral and other leaseholds. Wik is "settled" only in that it will not soon return to the federal parliament. But it is far from settled in detail, since the new law will now be tested repeatedly in the courts, as will state legislation intended to supplement it. The rights recognised are to "traditional" uses of the land. These are foraging and hunting, and access to sites with religious significance, which can co-exist — perhaps sometimes with difficulty — with sheep and cattle ranching. But the possibility of compensation, as when mining industries want to move in, sometimes gives the rights a cash value.

Wik is also far from settled in the public mind. The anger of Aboriginal spokesmen charging that their rights have been diluted by the compromises which got the law through the Senate is matched by that of white country people, who feel the balance of power on the land has somehow been tipped against them. The more general hostility to special rights also shows in the swell of support for the One Nation party with its strictures against the "Aboriginal industry", but is also marked on the intellectual right.

HOW TO deal, morally and practically, with a situation that has greatly changed is the problem Australia faces. Nor are the benefits at stake the same. Traditional rights to land in late 18th century Australia cannot truly be restored, since the conditions of those days cannot be recreated. For some Aborigines, the land as a combination of home, storehouse and sacred space still has meaning. Yet it is also true that modern ideas of property rights affect indigenous people. Compensation could well mean that what was emphatically not a commodity in traditional Aboriginal life will become one.

What the land meant to 18th century white Australians and what it means today is also different. Then, it was the prime commodity. Now minerals occupy that position, and Australian land is seen as fragile and perhaps close to exhaustion. The attitude of rural people draws some quality of desperation from this ecological insecurity.

Many of these ordinary white Australians want only to talk in the language of individual rights. This is what the majority of them voted for in the 1967 referendum which in effect gave Aborigines full citizenship. When they see Aborigines they do not see other cultures, but individuals with the same rights, no more and no less, than other Australians. There is sadness in the fact that they can see no parallel between their own sense of dispossession and marginalisation and the infinitely more complete dispossession of Aborigines two centuries ago.

On one side of the argument is the common sense of "That was then, and this is now", and a sharp eye for the scams never absent from group politics. On the other is sensibility, conscience, empathy, and the comforts of the moral high ground. It is not a gap that is going to be easily bridged.

Everyone a winner

COMMENT
Jean-Marie Colombani

NOTHING, of course, has changed. France is still faced with the same old problems. They will not go away simply because its football team, under Aimé Jacquet's stewardship, won the World Cup on July 12; and they are likely to resurface once the party is over.

And yet, amid all the euphoria that has swept France, there is a feeling that something has changed, or could change, in our collective unconscious — something to do with our French identity which, in the course of a global jamboree, gradually took on a multiracial complexion: black, white and *beur* (French-born Arab).

There was another element, too, which could come to symbolise a transition from one era to another. First came the Bernard Tapie years, when all the prizes went to a man who, when he ran the Olympique de Marseille football team, came to embody the money-grabbing ethos that allowed a small group of people to get rich quickly and dishonestly by exploiting the public's thirst for sporting thrills.

We may now have entered the Jacquet era. Easy money and compulsive individualism have not disappeared for all that. But the practice of certain virtues could prove useful.

The question raised by the World Cup is this: have we spent the past few weeks inside a protective yet illusory bubble that is doomed to burst almost immediately, or are we capable of turning this sporting event into a parable for our times?

A football team that was both "national" and multiracial, both diverse and united, managed to surpass itself and reach the final when it was regarded, at the beginning of the competition, as a no more than an average side.

The parallel with a country such as France, which is perceived as weary, hidebound and convinced it is now a nation of no more than middling importance, immediately springs to mind. Instead of dreading the necessary process of modernisation, why can't France drum up the ambition and discipline to take up the challenge?

And if it is a fact that the main task facing us today is integration, let us take a leaf out of Jacquet's book. He embodies the three integrating forces that once used to exist in this country: the secular schoolteacher who methodically and patiently applies rigorous principles rather than playing to the gallery, passing over, for example, such Lacanian stars as Eric Cantona in favour of those he believes to be more deserving; the country priest sustained by his faith in group work; and the hard-working factory worker who values nothing more than a well-knit team.

Jacquet, then, has come to symbolise a national unity reforged on the football field after a global sports "war". In so doing he has proved that France's social and political fabric need not be a fractured entity that sometimes revels, and sometimes wallows uncomfortably, in the ethos of disagreement.

He has also demonstrated the worth of a teaching method based on trust and effort, but also requires a degree of tolerance and the ability to listen.

At the same time, however encouraging it was to see a multi-ethnic team on the football field, racism is still alive and well and living in France, as a recent Le Monde opinion poll showed. Fear of others and worries about identity continue to undermine our society.

Interestingly, only the far-right National Front was left out of the World Cup phenomenon. It even found itself, for the first time in years, floundering and virtually speechless.

It is up to the nation now to give the Jacquet parable a further lease of life, up to children, teachers, politicians and employers, in their respective domains, to muster new energy and determination to get into "the final". And they must do so without exclusion, prejudice or cheating, and without confusing the euphoria generated by advertising and media hype with the actual result.

(July 14)

Le Pen faces challenge to leadership

Christiane Chombeau

BRUNO MÉGRET, second-in-command of the far-right National Front (FN), will head his party's list at Marseille's local elections in 2002, it was revealed at the FN-organised Fête des Tricolores on July 11 at Saint-Martin-du-Crau in the Bouches-du-Rhône *département*.

According to a party cadre present at the fête, Vitrolles — the town of which Mégret's wife, Catherine, is mayor by proxy — has turned out to be more difficult to run than expected. Mégret, therefore, felt it necessary to find another political base on a par with his ambition, which is to lead the FN.

His campaign has already begun. In the afterglow of the regional elections that left the mainstream right in disarray, Mégret's supporters have been working tirelessly at grassroots level.

September's senatorial elections will give them a chance to come into contact with rightwing elected representatives and stir up further ill-feeling by peddling the notion that the mainstream right is "the most stupid in the world in that it handed over control of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, where the right is in the majority, to the left".

Mégret, who attended the fête, said nothing about the latest plans of the FN leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen. On June 14 Le Pen told a gathering of the FN's Loire-Atlantique federation that if the appeal court confirmed a recent two-year ban on his standing for office — thus preventing him from leading the FN list at the European elections next June — his name "would appear in even bigger letters on the posters of FN candidates; through the intermediary of my family, of course".

The candidate that Le Pen is apparently about to put forward is his wife, Janie, who is currently president of SOS Enfants d'Irak and honorary president of the Cercles des Amitiés Protestantes.

There was palpable disgruntlement among those activists at the fête who knew about their leader's plan. "We mustn't confuse local elections with a general election," said one Mégret supporter. Another said: "When a leader is prevented from standing, his second-in-command should replace him. Le Pen's declaration was a provocation."

According to well-informed sources, on June 15 Mégret officially presented his candidacy as leader of the list for the European elections. If by chance Le Pen were to persist with his plans, Mégret would, according to his supporters, ask the party's central committee to decide between them — a move that is unprecedented in the annals of the FN.

(July 14)

Economic crisis undermines Khatami

Mouna Naïm in Tehran

THE citizens of Iran's capital are eagerly awaiting the verdict in the trial of their mayor, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, whose courtroom appearance on charges of corruption and mismanagement has been extensively covered on television. But they know that after sentencing, due by the end of the month, they will have to turn their attention once again to the task of coping with the effects of Iran's worsening economic crisis.

"The economy is our Achilles heel," says Ali Shams Ardekani, general secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines. "There's too much political manoeuvring at the expense of the economy. The population and the government are aware of the problem, but, as the Iranian proverb goes, fish look for each other in water — in other words, everyone is worried, but nobody takes the problem seriously."

Tehran gives an illusion of prosperity. Constructing high-rise buildings is big business, but once completed they remain half-empty. "My wife and I can no longer live on our monthly budget," says a journalist who writes for several foreign newspapers and is, therefore, better paid than his colleagues. That gives some idea of what life must be like for those lower down the ladder.

"One of the great strengths of this country is its sense of family relationships," says a Western diplomat. "There's no such thing as exclusion. That does wonders for people's morale, and defuses their anger."

And then everyone has a second job, which has led to a high rate of absenteeism in factories. Those deliberately missing work risk nothing because the labour laws make it almost impossible for companies to dismiss staff. "You just need to look at the statistics to understand the gravity of the problem," Ardekani says. "The population growth rate has been very high over the past 20 years — about 3.7 per cent a year. Those born in the seventies and eighties are now coming on to the labour market.

"At the same time, there has been a structural change in the workforce, with more and more women working. The combination of those factors means that the number of job seekers has gone up by 6 per cent, whereas the workforce should in principle increase in roughly the same proportion as the population."

By 2005 Iran should have created 10 million jobs. But no one quite knows how or by whom they will be created. "We can't talk of social justice if we have nothing to offer those coming on to the job market," Ardekani says.

Successive governments have been sending the wrong signals by subsidising large numbers of products. "If you tell people they are absolutely entitled to consume but fail to add that they need to work in order to be able to consume, you're courting disaster," Ardekani says.

Almost a year after becoming president, the reform-minded Mohammed Khatami has correctly concluded that the economy is in poor shape and needs structural reforms.

But an economic strategy has failed to emerge in the past year while Iran has been busy paying back its foreign debt and financing imports with its remaining oil revenues. These revenues initially cushioned the economy from the worst of the crisis, but plummeting oil prices have brought the problems to the fore. There has been sporadic industrial unrest throughout the country, but so far it has only rarely led to violence, says Muhammad Sadeq Al Husseini, an adviser to the minister of culture and Islamic orientation, Ataollah Mohajerani.

Husseini thinks the only way the government can deal with the crisis is to combine a number of the economic measures implemented by the outgoing president, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, with policies pursued during the Iran-Iraq war. These include increasing subsidies, stepping up foreign investment, and ensuring that the private sector participates more actively in the economy in the form of co-operatives.

In February and March the government hinted that it might increase prices at petrol pumps, even if it meant that it would have to cushion the more underprivileged against the effects of such a move. But it now seems to have been dissuaded from doing so by the crisis in Indonesia, where more expensive petrol brought down President Suharto. According to one Western observe almost all Tehranis supplement their income by running a part-time taxi service.

A Western analyst thinks the country needs to be opened up, to create an environment favourable to foreign investment. Even in the oil sector the buy-back system does not work satisfactorily for companies. The heart of the problem lies in the fact that, in the economic field — more than in any other — the Islamic republic is pulling in several directions at once. The left wing of the presidential majority favours a centralised economy, while its so-called liberal wing prefers a controlled form of neoliberalism.

Their conservative opponents are in league with the powerful *bazaaris* (traders) and are funded by the *bunyads*, semi-governmental foundations that in some cases have expanded into veritable financial empires. In other words, there is no openness whatsoever, and the crisis has been steadily weakening the position of the popular Khatami.

(July 14)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY July 26 1998

His advertising campaigns have caused intrigue and outrage in equal measure. **Michel Guerrin** meets photographer Oliviero Toscani

Nothing succeeds like excess



THE photographer Oliviero Toscani must be a happy man: for the past 10 years, under the aegis of Luciano Benetton, he has been able to indulge his every dream and every whim, all in the good cause of shaping the image of the Italian pullover magnate.

Since 1988 the outspoken Toscani, who hails from Milan, has covered poster hoardings, filled newspapers and adorned the windows of 7,000 clothes shops the world over with advertising campaigns that intrigue, disturb or outrage the public.

The campaigns get talked about not because of the quality of Benetton pullovers, their cut, the strength of their fabric or the variety of colours they come in, but because of the way their advertising combines a commercial logo, United Colors, with images reflecting some of the urgent issues facing society — images showing buttocks stamped with the words "HIV Positive", male and female sexual organs, a priest kissing a nun on the mouth, a black woman suckling a white baby, a newborn child covered with placenta and still attached to its umbilical cord, the blood-soaked uniform of a dead soldier in Sarajevo.

"I've never said no to Oliviero," Benetton drawls. He receives visitors at his superb Villa Minelli, set among lawns and surrounded by his factories at Ponzano, near Treviso in northeastern Italy. "I have fun with Oliviero because we don't talk about ourselves, but about what's going on around us." Benetton, a rather reserved man, is wearing one of his own pullovers. He once posed in the nude to promote the Red Cross's campaign to get people to donate their old clothes — a gimmick that only added to the aura of scandal surrounding Benetton.

Toscani is an exuberant, outgoing man — the very opposite of his boss: "Ponzano is the Renaissance, and Luciano is my Lorenzo de' Medici — I'm the luckiest man in the world. I've six kids, I was able to have affairs at a time when Aids had not yet appeared, I've travelled a lot, I've lived in New York, I found the ideal wife, I'm a grandfather, I experienced the sixties, with its miniskirts and rock 'n' roll, I attended a Beatles concert."

And then there is his Tuscan farm, 150 hectares overlooking the sea, with its 5,000 olive trees (they produce his own brand of olive oil, Olio Vero Toscano di Oliviero Toscani) and 60 Appaloosa horses. "It's paradise on earth," he says.

Toscani has become the guru of Ponzano. Benetton has given him not only his advertising budget but a magazine, Colors, and La Fabbrica, a visual arts school housed in an elegant building. Twenty students from all over the world attend the school at Benetton's expense.

"People don't understand my relationship with Luciano," Toscani says. "When I'm at Ponzano I have a room in his house. We live like two old bachelors." Nothing comes between them, and especially not his worst enemy, traditional admen. "I've got rid of those monsters who peddle lies," says Toscani, who wrote a book attacking them — *Advertising Is Carrion Which Smiles At Us*.

Yet he started out "peddling" Bata shoes and Scandale bras. "I did thousands of pages of fashion photos and Claudia Schiffer's first Elle cover." But he is also the born provocateur, who once had no scruples about photographing a naked baby lying on its back on a serving dish like some Christmas turkey.

He caused his first scandal with a 1973 ad for Jesus jeans. "I showed the beautiful bottom of a woman wearing the jeans, which bore the words 'If any man serve me, let him follow me'. Everyone came down on me like a ton of bricks — everyone except Pasolini, that is, who wrote an article in my defence."

It needed a perfect working relationship between Toscani and Benetton for them to be able to change the name of a brand that was doing well. In 1988 Benetton decided to give his product a more international image.

Toscani looked into the theme of difference. He took photos in a Paris street of kids from various ethnic groups. A Unesco official saw the photos and said: "It's United Colors of Benetton." Bingo! "Naturally the admen in the group were furious," Toscani remembers.

The photos, which showed children of different colours, echoing the pullovers' bright colours, were still the kind of "advertising that gives people a good conscience", Toscani says. He gradually began to drift away from the product. In 1989 he showed a black woman suckling a white baby — but she was still wearing a red pullover.

In 1991 Benetton wanted to respond to the Gulf war. Toscani suggested a picture of a war cemetery with thousands of white crosses. That produced the first major outcry and the first instances of censorship.

Other posters followed, whose aim was to exploit press photos on such themes as Aids, war, the mafia, pollution, racism and refugees by stamping them with the United Colors logo.

Toscani has an opinion about everything — except the quality of Benetton products. What he prefers to talk about is the world at large, so as to foster the image of "an anti-racist, modern company that opens up debate about social phenomena".

Toscani interprets the world from a universalist standpoint, scratching only the surface of things by using stereotypes intelligible to people everywhere, from Paris, Havana and Rome to Tokyo, Beijing and Los Angeles. "I've defined four themes that are common to mankind: sex, religion, race, and life and death. All my posters hinge on them."

Toscani also likes to see himself as someone who "registers our fears — illness, old age, foreigners, wars, medicine, the consumer society, pollution, Aids and death". Benetton campaigns refer to such fears, and flaunt the United Colors logo as a guarantee of quality and redemption.

Toscani has had to deal with a great deal of flak (as well as a few court cases). He has been accused of demagoguery, populism, indecency, provocation and making money out of people's suffering. Such criticism greatly angers Toscani, who has often been described as a megalomaniac and a cynic. He says he shows "the world as it really is".

Benetton never allows himself to get worked up, but simply rakes in the proceeds. But their line of defence is identical: "Benetton has never had a single pullover made by an Indochinese child. Everything is manufactured at Ponzano, and also



Oliviero Toscani, above, and one of his controversial pictures for a Benetton ad campaign

to some extent in France and Spain. If it were otherwise, our posters would be indefensible."

By contending that everyone is like everyone else, removing any sense of hierarchy, comparing what cannot be compared, and reducing complicated issues to stereotypes. Toscani ends up producing a colourless man, a universal mutant with no personality of his own. He denies the individual, preferring to show "the family of man".

Toscani, aged 56, is himself not very different from that image: a tall, burly man in jacket and jeans, he describes himself as "neither rightwing nor leftwing, but radical libertarian".

One wonders whether he still has any notion of time or space. He has no office of his own — "I set myself up wherever there's room". Each year he spends $100,000 on air fares and clocks up 60,000km in his Mercedes. On a typical day he might get up at 4.30am in Tuscany and be ready for action in Ponzano at 9am after driving across half the country. Does he ever take a holiday? "No, never, holidays produce a mental vacuum."

THE force of his visual universe derives from two totally contrasting influences. One is the ambiguous neutrality of the document, which he discovered at Zurich's School of Applied Arts when studying the New Objectivity of German art in the twenties and thirties. And the other is the emotional impact of press photography, which he learnt from his father, a photographic reporter on the leading Italian daily Il Corriere Della Sera. The young Toscani would deliver his father's still damp prints to the newspaper's offices, then see them next day in the paper his schoolteacher was carrying. "Engraved on my memory is the photo my father took of the hanging of Mussolini."

Toscani describes himself as a "modern illiterate", does not read books and hates television. But he devours dozens of newspapers a day.

His passion for news is what prompts him to include topical events in his posters, or to get Palestinians in Gaza or Sicilians in Mafia country to pose for his catalogues. But what he is looking for is not so much the news content as the feeling — pain, hatred, compassion — he can generate by combining the image with the Benetton brand.

Toscani is so in love with the press that Benetton offered him Colors, a colour magazine printed on newsprint. Published in 10 languages and in around 60 countries, Colors naturally talks about everything under the sun: animals, migrations, race, the streets, Aids, religion, sport, travel, war, work and body shopping.

The magazine encapsulates the "Toscani philosophy". It describes topical events through the prism of human adventure, jumbles together all sorts of values without giving them any hierarchy, answers all questions in the simplest and bluntest possible manner and throws in just a hint of scandal for good measure. That is how we learn what brand of bras nuns wear, for example.

Toscani puts across his provocative message with an aesthetic approach to photography that is reminiscent of the Photomaton: frontal portraits, clinical precision, white or neutral backgrounds.

"In order to provoke debate, the image must be as spare as possible," he explains. "The ideal image is a picture of barbed wire against a white background. There is no detail that might blur the message. What I'd like to do is to be able to take an image from a DIY catalogue and turn it into a political message."

The portraits Toscani does for Benetton catalogues are plain, too, but they are given added spice by the reportage context in which he shoots them, using random "casting" — Chinese in China, for instance, or Palestinians in Gaza. Toscani also exploits excess — when he accumulates large numbers of passport photographs.

He recently produced a portrait of the city of Livorno, taking photos of 1,000 people per day for 10 days. They will be put on display in the city. Toscani naturally despises photographers "who go in for arty photographs and are cut off from the world", and prefers to produce "a picture of our times".

He claims to keep no archives and uses the term "ludicrous" to describe "the fetishism surrounding photographers' own prints", which he regards as "relics". His photographs are not to be found in art galleries — "Galleries are for frustrated artists who have hang-ups about classical painting."

Toscani prefers images that are printed, photocopied, enlarged on computer, covered with screen dots, multiplied an infinite number of times, combined with words and headlines. In other words the image as an object of communication, not of contemplation.

"Photography has a meaning only if it is connected with the world and industry," Toscani says. "Andy Warhol realised that. Mozart was more commercial than Madonna."

This is just one of Toscani's many paradoxes: he hates art photography, yet is one of the very few photographers to have been given major exhibitions at the Venice Biennale and the Lausanne Musée d'Art Contemporain.

He emerges from Ciao Mamma, the book he has written about his life and work, as someone with more than a touch of megalomania. Toscani would like to have a finger in every pie. A close friend has said of him: "Oliviero would be equally at home printing his images on dustbins as he would on the Sistine Chapel."

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Starr Gets Bodyguards To Testify

Peter Baker and Bill Miller

AFTER an unprecedented battle that went all the way to the Supreme Court, two uniformed Secret Service officers and a retired plainclothes agent were questioned before a grand jury last week, marking the first time that active White House guards have testified in a criminal investigation of the president they protect.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist waited until just four minutes before a high-noon deadline on Friday last week to declare that he would not stop the testimony, in a dramatic climax to six months of legal skirmishing. Independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr wasted no time savoring his win, forcing the Secret Service personnel to return to the courthouse and borrowing a grand jury working on other matters to hear them.

During two hours of closed afternoon hearings, Starr's chief deputy, Jackie M. Bennett Jr., questioned officers Gary J. Byrne and John Muskett and retired agent Robert Ferguson, according to people informed about the proceedings. Secret Service personnel were instructed to return this week for more testimony about what they know of President Clinton's dealings with Monica S. Lewinsky.

Special Agent Larry L. Cockell, the head of Clinton's security detail, also showed up at the courthouse under orders from Starr, but prosecutors opted not to bring him before the grand jury. Doing so might have provoked another legal battle because Clinton's private attorneys fear that Cockell may be asked about what he heard the president tell his lawyer after his deposition in the Paula Jones case, and Starr may have been leery of any further delays.

"We're just going to try to get the relevant information as fast as we can," said Starr spokesman Charles G. Bakaly III. In response to Clinton concerns, Bakaly said, "We have never intended to question Secret Service agents about privileged conversations they may have overheard between the president and his private lawyers."

Until last week, Starr had been stymied in his efforts to figure out what the people who spend the most time close to the president know about his relationship with Lewinsky. Only a single retired officer, Lewis C. Fox, had testified, and he said he told the grand jury that Clinton and Lewinsky spent 40 minutes together in the Oval Office in the fall of 1995.

While other Secret Service personnel were in position to see comings and goings as well, it remained unknown whether they can shed more light on whether Clinton tried to cover up an affair with Lewinsky during the Jones case. But Starr evinced confidence that they will, declaring in a Supreme Court brief unsealed on Friday last week that "the privileged information that has been withheld is quite likely to have the highest relevance to charges of the most serious nature."

Sources close to the situation have said Byrne complained to then-White House deputy chief of staff Evelyn S. Lieberman about Lewinsky's behavior in the spring of 1996, shortly before Lieberman had the young correspondence clerk transferred to the Pentagon.

The Secret Service fought Starr vigorously, arguing that a never-before-recognized "protective function privilege" asserted by Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin should protect its personnel from disclosing what they see and hear while guarding the president, except for obvious felonies. The agency said violating confidentiality would prompt presidents to keep agents at a distance, and thereby increase risk of assassination.



Larry Cockell (centre), chief of President Clinton's bodyguards, leaves the Washington court last week PHOTOGRAPH: RON EDMONDS

FDA Approves Thalidomide for Leprosy

John Schwartz

THALIDOMIDE, a drug whose name for decades has been synonymous with nightmarish birth defects and death, won approval last week to treat a painful symptom of leprosy.

In licensing the notorious drug for that narrow purpose, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration imposed unprecedented restrictions on its use to prevent a recurrence of the medical crisis that gripped the world in the early 1960s.

While fewer than 100 people in the United States suffer from the condition for which the drug was approved, doctors are now free to prescribe it for other purposes. And because thalidomide has shown promise for cancer and AIDS patients, the number of people taking the drug is expected to be much higher.

Moreover, officials said they were taking extraordinary steps to protect the public because of thalidomide's unique status in U.S. history.

Once prescribed by many doctors to treat morning sickness, thalidomide caused more than 10,000 birth defects and an unknown number of miscarriages worldwide before being withdrawn in 1962. Although never approved in the United States, nearly two dozen American children were born with the characteristic missing or misshapen limbs associated with the drug's use after its U.S. manufacturer supplied samples to 1,200 doctors.

The tragedy also led to laws that strengthened the FDA and helped establish the regulatory framework considered by many nations to be the world's gold standard.

The return of thalidomide was greeted last week with grim resignation by those who work to prevent birth defects. "We'd prefer not to have the drug out there," said David Johnston, the medical director of the March of Dimes. But both Johnston's organization and the Thalidomide Victims Association of Canada have cautiously endorsed the approval.

The FDA is requiring doctors who prescribe thalidomide and pharmacies that sell it to register with the agency and undergo specific training on how to warn patients about the drug's dangers. Female patients won't get a prescription without a pregnancy test and must undergo regular additional pregnancy tests throughout the period of use. Women will also have to agree to use two reliable forms of contraception, and even though it is not known whether thalidomide passes into sperm, male patients will receive warnings about the need to use condoms. All patients will view a disturbing video warning, delivered by a thalidomide victim.

Tobacco Firms Paid For GOP Flights

Saundra Torry

LEADING U.S. tobacco companies made their corporate jets available to Republican lawmakers and GOP committees for dozens of flights in the past year, according to a report released this week by congressional Democrats.

The tobacco industry provided far more subsidized travel than any other industry, according to an examination of Democratic and Republican campaign finance reports by Democrats on the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. The planes took Republican leaders, sometimes in the company of tobacco executives, to destinations as close as New York City and as far away as San Diego. Investigators said they found no reports of Democrats traveling on tobacco planes between January 1997 and the end of May, the period covered by their study.

Much of the travel occurred as the tobacco companies were trying at first to get Congress to approve legislation to give them some protection from mounting lawsuits, and later as the companies successfully lobbied Republican senators to kill that legislation after the lawsuit protection was removed.

While lawmakers and campaign committees must pay the companies the equivalent of first-class airfare to their destination, private jet travel offers added convenience and luxury. In the case of a destination not served by commercial airlines, travelers pay the "charter rate."

The companies pick up the remaining costs of the flights, which can be tens of thousands of dollars above the price of a first-class ticket, according to the report released by Rep. Henry A. Waxman, D-California, one of Congress's leading tobacco foes. Waxman is the Government Oversight committee's senior Democrat.

Rep. John Linder, R-Georgia, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), said in an interview that he sees "nothing wrong" with the travel. It is "another big perk we get," he said. "I don't apologize for it."

The NRCC, Linder said, often arranges such travel with companies when House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Georgia, or other leaders "make a [campaign] swing . . . It's a matter of getting in and out of three events in three cities" in one day, he said. It couldn't be done by commercial air travel, he said.

Linder said he flew to the Super Bowl in San Diego in January on a plane supplied by one of the tobacco companies. He also flew to a GOP function in Pinehurst, North Carolina, this summer, he said, on a UST Inc. jet, accompanied by "people from companies" headed to the same event.

According to a tobacco industry source, "Word gets around pretty quick, as to who flies and who doesn't." Members or campaigns, he said, call the company "and say, 'We are doing a trip. Is it possible that you can fly us from point A or X to Y?'" Then, he said, "we decide, yea or nay."

Other industries provide jet travel to lawmakers, including Democrats, the report said. The health care industry, currently involved in a battle over major legislation on Capitol Hill, was the second-biggest flight provider. Other top providers included the insurance industry, casino gaming interests and travel stores.

According to the report, Republican-controlled entities made 236 payments for travel to corporations during the 17 months of Federal Election Commission disclosures studied — 84 to the tobacco industry. Democratic entities made 23 payments to corporations.

Asked for details of Democratic travel, investigators provided data showing that campaign committees controlled by House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt, D-Missouri, were the biggest Democratic users of corporate jets on 19 occasions.

"By far, the biggest single recipient of subsidized travel from the tobacco industry is the NRCC," which paid the industry about $190,000 for travel in 17 months, the report said. Political committees controlled by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Mississippi, paid the companies for travel on 12 occasions; those controlled by House leaders Richard K. Armey, R-Texas, and Tom DeLay, R-Texas, also reimbursed the industry for travel.

Spokesmen for Lott and DeLay said they comply with all the campaign finance laws; a spokesman for Armey did not return calls.

According to the report, investigators were seeking "to determine the extent of campaign travel by members and committees subsidized by the tobacco industry."

The system allows corporations to make "stealth contributions" because they provide a "direct benefit" far in excess of what is publicly reported, Waxman said. Instead of having to "schlep around to airports and wait for schedules," he said, a lawmaker can take a corporate jet "whenever he wants . . . at a fraction of the cost of what the trip is really worth."

Tobacco company spokesmen said the use of the planes is legal. "We comply with the law and do what we have to do," said John Atwood of UST, which the report said provided the most subsidized travel of any corporation.

Joan Biskupic writes: There is to be no turning back from widespread bans on smoking at work, in restaurants and on airplanes, despite a federal judge's decision last week that a government report declaring secondhand smoke causes cancer was seriously flawed, according to officials.

Ruling in a lawsuit brought by cigarette makers, U.S. District Judge William L. Osteen Sr. of North Carolina said the influential 1993 Environmental Protection Agency report stemmed from faulty methods and failed to demonstrate the link between secondhand smoke and lung cancer.

The scathingly worded opinion accused the agency of committing to an anti-tobacco conclusion before the research began and ignoring evidence that contradicted its premise.

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Auto workers on strike picket outside the Flint Metal Center in Michigan PHOTOGRAPH: CARLOS OSORIO

U.S. Trade Deficit Hits Record $15bn

John M. Berry

THE U.S. trade deficit hit a record $15.7 billion in May as exports, particularly to Japan and other economically troubled Asian nations, fell and imports continued to rise, the Commerce Department reported last week.

Analysts said the trade figures, coupled with other data released last week, indicate the U.S. economy probably contracted at a 1 percent to 2 percent annual rate during the April-June period.

A decline in economic output would constitute an unprecedented swing over the course of a single quarter. In the first three months of the year, consumer spending and business investment in new equipment increased so much that the nation's gross domestic product rose at a 5.4 percent pace even though the trade deficit increased significantly.

"Asian turmoil is taking a huge toll on U.S. growth," said Bruce Steinberg, chief economist for Merrill Lynch & Co. in New York. "The U.S. economy is being subjected to an immense production shock."

A portion of the drop in production is also due to the United Auto Workers strike that has shut down General Motors Corp. plants across the country.

A rising trade deficit is a drag on production because it means U.S. businesses and consumers are buying more items made abroad.

On top of that, the Commerce Department reported earlier this week that business inventories fell slightly, by 0.1 percent, in May. A decline in the rate at which firms are adding to their stock of unsold goods depresses growth because it means less production is needed.

Against this background, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan was expected to make his semi-annual report on monetary policy and the economy to the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday and to a House Banking subcommittee on Wednesday. When he gave his previous report in February, House Democrats pressed the Fed chairman to cut interest rates to head off any possible loss of jobs due to the Asian turmoil.

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Hispanics Set to Outstrip Blacks as Largest Minority

Barbara Vobejda

THE NUMBER of Hispanic children in the United States has surpassed the number of African American children, the federal government reported last week, signalling the leading edge of a demographic wave that will transform the national profile in the coming decades.

There are now 10.5 million Hispanic children aged under 18, outnumbering non-Hispanic black children by 35,000. That numerical benchmark constitutes the earliest indicator of a population change that experts have predicted for some time — the point seven years from now when Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority group.

The trend lines underscore the racial and ethnic reconfiguration in the United States, as white Americans steadily decline as a share of the population and communities coast to coast take on a more diverse character.

Since birth rates are higher among Hispanic women, the makeover is occurring first among the nation's children, where classrooms and playgrounds and soccer fields in many communities reflect a broad range of languages and cultures.

"Children are experiencing the diversity earlier than we are," said Ken Bryson, senior analyst at the Census Bureau. "People who have children in school may be aware that the school they went to is not the school their children are going to."

In just a generation, the report said, white non-Hispanic children have declined from 74 percent to 66 percent of all children. And by 2020, projections show, more than one in five children will be of Hispanic origin.

Also, the number of school-age children who speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English has doubled since 1979, making up 5 percent of all children in those age groups.

In many communities, these changes are igniting a debate over the merits of bilingual education, particularly in California, where non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the majority as early as next year. California voters recently rejected the practice of teaching children in both English and their native languages in favor of one year of intensive instruction in English.

The report, America's Children: Key National Indicators Of Well-Being, was released by a consortium of federal agencies and dealt with a range of measures describing the nation's population under 18.

The statistics, from health to economic status and educational achievement, portrayed improvements in some areas and serious problems in others.

Smoking, drinking and alcohol use, for example, has been rising across racial and ethnic groups. Reading scores are declining among ninth graders. The proportion of poor children without sufficient food increased from 9 percent in 1994 to 15 percent two years later.

But infant mortality is down, immunization rates have improved, teen births have declined and more parents are reading to their children every day.

Three-Way Split Keeps Nigeria Divided

Karl Vick in Lagos

BEHIND all the talk of returning democracy to Nigeria looms the burned wreckage of the Paki Trading and Transport Co.

As word spread on July 7 that Moshood Abiola, the man Nigerians five years ago thought they had elected president, had died just as he was to be released from prison, the muggy streets of Lagos filled with angry young men. Cars were tipped on their sides, windows were smashed, and tires were set on fire in the road.

And at Paki Trading and Transport, a crowd methodically brought down its towering concrete wall, stripped and burned 16 big rigs inside, incinerated the offices and looted the warehouses. In the tin-roofed shelter that serves as a workplace mosque, security guard Garda Ali Paki was sliced to death.

Company co-owner Alhai Abdullahi Usman Dan Inn stood beside the bloodstain at the site of the killing and declared: "The whole problem here is ethnic. We are from the Hausa tribe. They came here attacking our people."

In Lagos, "they" could only be Yoruba, the tribe that dominates southwestern Nigeria in the same way as the Hausa dominate the country's north and the Ibo its southeast.

The three ethnic groups account for most of the population of Africa's most populous country, and in the mythology of nation-building they are supposed to be equal partners. A sculpture at a Lagos freeway overpass portrays them as three happy children together holding Nigeria aloft.

But the increasingly perilous reality is that Nigeria has been dominated through nearly its entire history by Hausas — usually Hausas wearing green berets and epaulets. The military regimes that have ruled the nation for 28 of its 38 years have been overwhelmingly northern.

The democracy movement, not coincidentally, is dominated by southerners — and most of all by Yorubas, who blame the central government for everything from the nation's economic plight to the decision to move the capital from Lagos north to Abuja.

Abiola, who was handily winning the 1993 presidential election when the military abruptly annulled it, was a Yoruba. And in the wake of his extraordinarily untimely death the cry for democracy in Nigeria — though heard in all parts of the country from members of all ethnic groups — is loudest here and is more than ever a cry for Yoruba power in the face of Hausa domination.

But after the recent violence in some Lagos streets, analysts say the fear is that ethnic tensions that so far have been channeled mostly into the democracy movement might — if that movement is again blocked — find outlet elsewhere. "It is too terrible to contemplate," said Abraham Adesanya, a leading democracy activist.

"The Road To Kigali," reads the headline in the latest edition of the News, a Nigerian weekly. Nigerian readers immediately recognized both the capital of Rwanda and the pointed reference to the tribal violence that left more than a half-million dead in that country four years ago. Although not nearly on the scale of the Rwandan genocide, or even the clashes between Hindus and Muslims on the Asian subcontinent, Nigeria has known communal violence itself.

In 1966, tensions between Hausas and Ibos climaxed in mass killings and mass exodus. The Biafra war — which brought much of the world its first look at Nigeria in stark photos of the 1 million people who died in the famine that came with it — was fought over the Ibos' attempts to form their own republic after the slayings at the hands of Hausas.

Outside Abiola's home, a separatist group hung a banner reading: "Now We Stand on the Republic of Oduduwa," the historical name for the western region. "Yeah, Yoruba-land. That's our own republic," said Gbiningie Solomon.

Inside the Abiola compound, however, separatism had not yet ripened as an option. "We are going to douse it, because when all is said and done, we don't want our country to fragment," said his eldest child, Lola. "I like our country. I like the size of it. We need a totally detribalized country, like the man that just died."

Indeed, Abiola was much more than a Yoruba. He was also a Muslim, like most northerners. In 1993, before the ruling generals decided to call off the presidential balloting, he was carrying even the far northern home district of his Hausa opponent.

In the widespread support shown for Abiola, some see the way to a Nigeria united even without his charisma and largess; the millionaire businessman spent decades spreading his wealth around the country through charity. "Abiola was only a symbol," said Soji Onafedeji, 27, a hotel clerk in Lagos. "The struggle is about June 12," the date of the annulled 1993 election — the first time Nigerians were given the opportunity to vote for a president in 14 years.

Abiola's closest allies are saying that rather than mount a search for another messianic figure, the focus should be on reshaping the structure of government.

"We have to start with a clean slate," said Adesanya, who chairs the National Democratic Coalition, a leading democracy group. The group is urging military ruler Abdulsalam Abubakar, who has vowed to return the nation to civilian rule, to endorse a government of national unity. Such a government, composed of representatives from each region, would rule while a new constitution is drafted and parties formed. Adesanya, who met with Abubakar last week, said elections would follow in four or five years.

Abubakar, however, is said to be cool to that suggestion. One diplomat said that the general may schedule elections for year's end. The military regime would retain power in the meantime, the diplomat said, but to lend credence to the election plan, Abubakar might free all political prisoners, replace a significant number of state military administrators and name a new cabinet that includes civilian "statesmen."

Whatever the plan, few in this fractious country expect things to go easier without Abiola to unite it. "We are being forced to play Hamlet without the prince," said longtime supporter Olabiyi Durjaiye at Abiola's funeral.

A reporter, not sure he had heard right, asked: "To be or not to be?"

"That is the question," Durjaiye replied. Then, with a smile, a man just released from almost two years' political detention predicted Nigeria's answer. "To be," he said. "We're always optimistic. We will be."

Kenya Lawsuit Tests Masai Traditions

Karl Vick in Kajiado

AS CHILDREN will, Naataosim Mako sometimes eavesdropped on her parents. She was doing it the night she overheard them talking about her marriage. It shocked her. She did not want to get married. She was only 9 years old.

"I wanted to go to school," Naataosim said. And in her fear, that is where she went, fleeing the circular wooden compound where she was being raised in the tradition of the Masai — a pastoral tribe that has clung to its ancient customs — and taking refuge in the boarding school that held what she saw as the future: education.

Her father came after her. Mako Ololouaya, a tall, stern herdsman who wears the characteristic red blanket of a Masai, has three wives and 25 children. "They are all under my control," he declared, and to prove it took Naataosim back home.

But there he was confronted by his brother, a Masai herdsman who wears a blue blazer and khaki slacks. David Ololouaya also has three wives, but all of his 17 children who are old enough attend school, just as he did. He believed that Naataosim should be there, too, and has taken his brother to court to see that she gets the chance. "It is very necessary to be educated, because you can see the world from different perspectives," David Ololouaya said.

By that measure, the case of Ololouaya v. Ololouaya counts as a lesson in itself. It illuminates the dark side of the traditions the Masai hold so tenaciously — a warrior culture that assumes women have no more rights than children and can regard children as chattel — and it hinges on the very issues that loom largest for many women and girls all across Africa.

Forced marriage, limited access to education, and domestic abuse — Naataosim goes "numb," she said, at the memory of a friend she saw beaten by her husband — are customs that reinforce one another in any number of ethnic groups, according to women's rights advocates. And the fight to reverse them, fought largely in capital cities, often runs aground in rural areas still largely ruled by elders and tradition.

Which is why David Ololouaya's lawsuit strikes some as cause for hope. "To me, it begins to say that men have begun to believe in the fight," said Jennifer Mpungu, an education specialist with the Kenya office of the aid organization CARE, which is monitoring the case. "He's speaking out for a lot of people."

The Masai are something close to timeless. Masai men still stretch their earlobes, drape themselves in red and measure both wealth and status in the cattle they corral in circles formed by thorn bushes. Masai women still wear hoops of decorative beads at the tops of their ears, shave their heads and marry only after enduring a ritual circumcision that cuts away external genitalia.

Their striking appearance enchants the tourists who flock to the game preserves that have encroached on the tribe's ancestral grazing lands. But such strict adherence to tradition also means that only a quarter of Masai men have been to school, and perhaps as few as 5 percent of women, said S.S. ole Timoi, an official with Dupoto-e-Maa, a Masai organization here that promotes education.

Naataosim's father, Mako, 55, had no formal education. And although he expressed no objection to his children attending school, in Kenya, as elsewhere in Africa, school is not free. Annual fees can run higher than $200 in a country where the average annual income is $280, and families that can afford schooling at all tend to send their boys. Girls account for 70 percent of the 50 million African children who are eligible for school but do not attend.

Mako Ololouaya was no exception. The four of his children who went to school were boys, "because I was not wealthy enough to send everyone," he said.

Mako Ololouaya denied his brother's assertion that he was trading his 9-year-old daughter for a larger herd. But the "bride price" of five cows and 10,000 Kenyan shillings (about $165) that a neighbor offered for Naataosim was significantly higher than the token payment that by custom creates a symbolic bond of shared wealth between families. The intended bridegroom was three times her age.

And younger brides do command higher prices, said Priscilla Nangurai, headmistress of the African Inland Church boarding school to which Naataosim fled. The school, outside Kajaido, has gained a reputation as a haven since the first child bride showed up there in 1984. Charity Olongokie was 14. "She opened our eyes," said Nangurai, who has found support among local police and government officials. The most recent case, a 10-year-old, required vaginal surgery after two weeks with the husband she did not want.

Nangurai and others said that the age of unwilling brides is dropping along with the age at which girls are receiving ritual circumcision — also known as female genital mutilation — which is undergone at puberty and designates a Masai eligible for marriage. Nangurai said she does not know whether the change is driven by an earlier onset of puberty or by parents' eagerness to gain a dowry. But she knows why girls come to her school, she said. "Because the girls know they are right."

Naataosim betrays no doubt. "Without an education, I was going to be a poor woman," she said.

Her case is the basis for a challenge to the Kenyan constitution, which declares that in matters of "personal law," traditional customs override the law of the land. But the girl's father already has indicated he will relent, provided his brother pays her school fees. And David Ololouaya, who is head of his local school board, said he is confident the learning that enabled him to keep his herd healthy while others' died will also improve dubious social customs. "If people go to school and get a proper education, the community will realize later on that it's a good thing," he said.

David Ololouaya, left, with his brother Mako, right, whom he is suing in an effort to keep Mako's 9-year-old daughter, Naataosim, out of a forced marriage so that she can get an education PHOTO: KARL VICK

Chilean Children Gasp for Clean Air

Anthony Faiola in Santiago

IN THIS sprawling city, where the pollution is so thick that a greasy film seems to cover the nearby snow-capped Andes, Jorge Araya stood in the intensive-care ward of a children's hospital, glaring at the scene of his 6-week-old daughter gasping for breath. His wife wept silently by his side, but the only emotion he could muster was rage.

"I think having clean air should be the most basic human right," said Araya, a Santiago store clerk. He pointed to his daughter, whose upper body was enveloped by a plastic respirator. "Look at her. She's sick because she can't breathe the air!"

Downstairs from the ward, the emergency room at Exequiel Gonzalez Cortes Children's Hospital was flooded with infants and toddlers with similar respiratory problems — so many that the hospital has added additional beds to accommodate the more than 300 such patients who arrive each day. A major cause of their illnesses, say Chilean and international medical experts, is Santiago's worsening air pollution.

"The air has become toxic," said Dr. Enrique Accorsi, president of the Chilean Medical College. "And sick people is the result."

Santiago, a burgeoning city with a population of 5.3 million, is hardly alone in that regard. As developing nations from Chile to China have prospered economically, witnessing phenomenal growth in recent years, urban environments have suffered dramatic increases in air pollution — now identified by the World Health Organization as one of the fastest-growing contributors to sickness and death in the Third World.

The situation is especially bad in Latin America, a region that has experienced a major economic boom and also is home to some of the world's biggest cities, including Mexico City and Sao Paulo, Brazil, the world's second- and third-largest cities after Tokyo.

Latin America, moreover, maintains the highest level of urbanization in the developing world, with people clustered more closely together than in Asia or Africa. "A greater percentage of the population in Latin America is exposed to urban pollution," said Crescencia Mauer, division associate with the Washington-based World Resources Institute. "It increases the health risk."

The result is mounting illness and a generally degraded quality of life for millions. In Santiago, schools have been closed sporadically due to air-contamination alerts, and children and the elderly are often warned to limit their physical exercise due to poor air quality.

Emergency rooms are overrun with patients with respiratory problems. In one recent case, the family of a retiree from a small town outside Santiago sued the city after he died of respiratory arrest while trying to cash his pension check here in the capital. The problem is sparking a series of major protests in the city by groups such as doctors' unions and university students demanding stricter pollution laws.

In Santiago, several factors often give a combined level of particulate matter and ozone pollution comparable to a metropolis two or three times its size, according to city statistics and environmentalists. The pollution here is made more acute by the city's location in a valley where mountains form a barrier against wind. The problem is especially bad in the winter months of May through August, when cold air forms a Los Angeles-like inversion over the city, trapping smog in a fetid layer.

ONE key reason for the city's declining air quality is that Santiago's old pollution laws simply have not been able to keep up with its economic success and population growth. The number of heavy pollution days — when combined contaminants in the atmosphere reach a level high enough for the city to close factories and force some cars to remain at home — had been decreasing since 1993, but began rising again in 1995, and was up to 89 days in 1997.

Environmental and medical experts say the city air hasn't been able to tolerate rapid economic growth. The Chilean economy grew at a rate of 7 percent a year for most of the 1990s, and more and more rural residents migrated to the capital, which grew 20 percent from 1985 to 1996 and now harbors 35.4 percent of the national population.

While industry causes part of the problem, the bigger factor here is the rise in auto emissions. Today, more people here can afford cars than ever — and the number of vehicles on the road has ballooned to 627,452 in 1996, up 85 percent from 1985. While new cars are required to have catalytic converters, which scour pollutants from tailpipe emissions, old cars are not being taken off the road, environmentalists say.

"Unlike in the States where you have car graveyards, people buy new cars and their old ones, no matter how old, just get passed down to the person in the next socio-economic level," said Ximena Abogabir, director of the Casa de Paz, a Santiago-based environmental group. "It's a never-ending cycle."

Compounding the health risk is the ring of poor neighborhoods on Santiago's fringes, where residents still use coal to heat their homes and the air fills with dust from mountain erosion and unpaved roads.

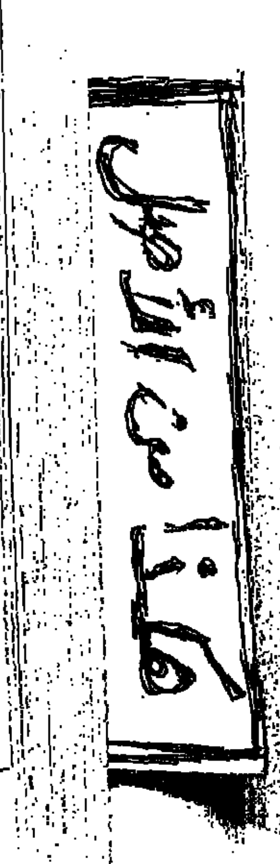
When coupled with Santiago's climatic patterns, the combination of pollutants is a toxic cocktail. The newspapers and television news have featured prominent coverage this winter of overburdened emergency rooms at children's hospitals.

"We have little doubt that in most cases the pollution is to blame, either directly or because it weakens the children's immune systems and makes them more susceptible to respiratory viruses," said Dr. Ivan Silva, emergency room chief at Exequiel Gonzalez Cortes Hospital. In his emergency room the other day, dozens of parents clutched wheezing babies.

"I know most of Santiago wants my head," acknowledged Clemente Perez, director of Santiago's Environmental Commission. "But they don't understand how much we are really doing to combat the problem.

When air pollution began to climb again in 1995, after an apparent decrease, the city developed a new "decontamination plan," officials said. Among other things, the plan includes the implementation this year of an improved system for measuring pollution levels, giving officials better information on which to base health warnings. The national government also is contemplating a new tax system that would entice factories to locate outside the capital. In Santiago, meanwhile, the city is experimenting with natural gas to fuel its fleet of 10,000 buses, which often tool around town half-empty belching noxious fumes.

But environmentalists here say such measures are too little too late, arguing that entire parts of the decontamination plan have been left unfunded. For now, Santiago residents have little choice but to breathe foul air.



Disposable Miracles

Thomas M. Disch

GAIN
By Richard Powers
Farrar Straus Giroux. 353 pp. $25

RICHARD Powers's powerful and peculiar novel, Gain, is the largest compliment any author has paid to the American reading public in decades, for the author assumes that we will take in his meaning, which is large, elusive and mortifying, without his offering a word of explanation. The author, though always lucid and straightforward, has delivered a sealed verdict. These are the facts, Powers seems to say, presenting two mighty mounds of evidence: You must interpret them.

The first mound is a chronicle of the slow death by ovarian cancer of an American Everywoman, Laura Bodey of Lacewood, Illinois, from the first test results to the moment her disposable camera is jettisoned by the nurse's aide cleaning out her bedside drawer. Every twitch and twinge and plangency of Laura's death is set forth in unsparing and luminous detail. Any reader will wish to die with similar stoic grace.

The other half of the book is an account, spanning two centuries, of the birth and proliferating growth of the Clare Corporation, as its founder Jephthah Clare parlays a cargo of Wedgewood stoneware into a multinational that will come to market, among other products, Viva-cleanse, Clarity Pore Purifier, Blue Spruce Vapogard, Sterisol, Infinistik, Gastrel Caps, and Partifest non-dari Treats. The economic history of "Clare Material Solutions" (one of its many corporate aliases) is imagined with such density of telling detail that this strand of the novel would make an excellent supplement to any course in the economic history of corporate America. Neither Marxist vituperation nor Chamber of Commerce hype, this is Big Business as rendered by the Recording Angel, lucidly, with a cool respect.

Readers expecting, as I did, that the twain will meet somewhere close to the denouement — and that Laura's cancer will be shown to have its sources in the ecological ravages wrought by the pharmaceutical Leviathan — are in for a surprise. Or, rather, for none at all. Laura does finally consent to take a ticket in the lottery of a class-action lawsuit brought by residents of Lacewood against Clare Inc., but there is no big courtroom scene, no showdown of any sort. Laura's attitude is summed up in one paragraph of world-weary wisdom when her loving ex urges her to get what is "due" her:

"She is due nothing. No more than anyone else with a body. No more than anyone who will get sick, which is everyone. As bad as she had it, millions will have it worse. She is on her own. She has always been on her own. And anyone who promises otherwise is selling a bill of goods."

This is not the world according to John Grisham or even E. L. Doctorow, where justice can triumph against the odds and Goliath corporations are zapped by an underdog David. Powers refuses to load his dice to favor innocence and virtue. Laura's suffering as she soldiers through her prescribed regimen of chemotherapy is evoked in unsparing detail, but it is not blamed on Big Medicine. All the misery in the book is just part of daily life and death, and the moments of transcendence, while often spectacularly beautiful, are just that — moments. This is an attitude more often found in poetry than in novels, where plots are designed so as to give us some sense of dramatic closure, resolution, justice.

What Powers offers, instead, is pragma, which is the Greek root of "pragmatic" and, as used in English, a collective noun meaning "things" — especially things of commercial value. Pragma was the theme of the first great novel in English literature, Robinson Crusoe, and it has been a standby of such novelists as Arthur Hailey and James Michener, who show us how the world works and how its units mesh together. But it has seldom been the territory staked out by such as Powers, who is as serious a contender for highbrow laurels as any novelist on the present scene.

Powers stints somewhat on drama but makes up for it in passages of epic scope — some as brief as the paragraph that inventories the eight distinct aromas Laura detects in her bedroom after a long absence in the hospital, others of Tolstoyan heft such as the concluding setpiece that is a hymn of praise to the disposable camera and the manufacturing infrastructure that makes it possible, which Powers sums up with just a twilight glow of Weltschmerz:

"As mundane as any breakthrough that seemed our whole salvation once. A disposable miracle, no less than the least of us."



ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY RUSSO

Brotherly Love and Family Madness

Mary Kay Zuravleff

I KNOW THIS MUCH IS TRUE
By Wally Lamb
HarperCollins. 901 pp. $27.50

WALLY Lamb's new novel is a torrential, encyclopedic saga of a troubled family. Narrator Dominick Birdsey opens the floodgates on October 12, 1990, the day his identical twin brother, Thomas, walks into the town library carrying their stepfather's knife. Praying aloud that his sacrifice will end the Persian Gulf crisis, Thomas cuts off his right hand as the terrified librarian dials 911 from beneath her desk.

Thomas is a paranoid schizophrenic; after his public self-mutilation, the state wants to lock him up and throw away the key. But Dominick fights the system with reckless zeal, partly because he hasn't won a fight for some time: He and Thomas lost their mother to cancer, he lost his infant daughter to crib death, and now his destructive anger has also cost him his marriage. And he's the healthy one.

Although hatched from one egg, the boys manage to straddle two decades: Thomas emerged on December 31, 1949, Dominick six minutes later, in the second half of the 20th century. In trying to discern the extent to which the twins really are identical, Lamb plumbs many notions of identity: linguistic (if your twin dies, are you still a twin?), philosophical (if you were replicated, would you be you?), ethical (could you stand on the shore if your sick/dangerous twin were drowning?), or even mystical (is your twin another you or your complement?).

Beginning with its beautiful cover, the first hundred pages of this very good book are astonishing. Against Thomas's wishes, doctors want Dominick to decide whether the hand should be reattached; accompanying that drama are accounts of his previous breakdowns, the family television exploding one Saturday morning in 1960, Mamie Eisenhower being photographed with the four-year-old twins in front of a nuclear sub, and a stepfather, Ray, whose absence is more comforting than his presence. Milquetoast Ma is there throughout, and her final gift to Dominick is a handwritten memoir of his Sicilian grandfather and namesake, Domenico Tempesto, whom she worshiped.

Lamb covers vast territory here, adroitly leaping from one telling detail to another. Amid his poignant vignettes is a gut-punch of a paragraph that summarizes Dominick's conflict:

"When you're the sane brother of a schizophrenic identical twin, the tricky thing about saving yourself is the blood it leaves on your hands — the little inconvenience of the look-alike corpse at your feet. And if you're into both survival of the fittest and being your brother's keeper — if you've promised your dying mother — then say so long to sleep and hello to the middle of the night. Grab a book or a beer. Get used to Letterman's gap-toothed smile of the absurd, or the view of the bedroom ceiling, or the indifference of random selection. Take it from a godless insomniac. Take it from the uncrazy twin — the guy who beat the biochemical rap."

Lamb's talent is such that he's able to describe Dominick's noble intentions alongside the resentment, embarrassment and fear that thwart those intentions. When the boys were growing up, Ray, who kept the household quaking with nervous tremors, claimed he was toughening the boys up and teaching them respect when he beat or berated them. If it was no skin off his nose, Dominick would rescue his brother; otherwise, he sacrificed him to Ray or some other bully. And so guilt adds rocket fuel to his burning desire to save Thomas.

Dominick finds allies in two humane social workers. One, Dr. Patel, records her sessions with Thomas and asks for Dominick's help in distinguishing between memory and delusion; his reaction to the tapes implies that he needs doctoring as well. Fatherless, brotherless, motherless, childless, Dominick feels the world has gone out of its way to destroy him. Dr. Patel points out how similar that attitude is to Thomas's grandiose pronouncements.

Indian-born Dr. Patel tells Dominick the Hindu legend of Bhagirath, who sought Shiva's help to reroute the Ganges from heaven to earth, that his ancestors might be purified and he might find peace. At the time, Dominick is knee-deep in drowned ancestors, many of whom were held under by his grandfather's own hand. Dr. Patel entreats him to forge ahead: "the stream of memory may lead you to the river of understanding. And understanding, in turn, may be a tributary to the river of forgiveness."

This reader felt that the river flooded its banks here and there, and that the author would have better served us by stanching the flow. Domenico's memoir could have been excerpted, superabundant examples of Ray's tantrums pared, and the life cycle of a few characters neglected. Most troubling was Lamb's crossing the line between recurring themes and repetitiousness. Having each generation reenact the same themes detracts from the individuality Lamb so brilliantly crafts. That said, rivers flood sometimes, and it seems petty to tell such a talented storyteller to go neither so wide nor so deep.

In Brief

Hardcovers

Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits, by Frances Borzello (Abrams, $55)

WHEN an artist creates an image of himself or herself, there's more to it than immediately meets the eye. "Self-portraits are not innocent reflections of what artists see when they look in the mirror," writes art historian Frances Borzello. "They are part of the language [they] use to make a point, from the simple 'this is what I look like' to the more complicated 'this is what I believe in.'" Though self-portraits by women "may seem as rare as a four-leaved clover, they are not, in fact, that uncommon." Seeing Ourselves makes that abundantly clear. The book begins with medieval examples, mostly by cloistered nuns — Claricia, Diemudis, Guda — who inserted self-portraits into manuscripts they illustrated. In the 16th century, female artists in the secular world began to establish themselves, wrestling with how to depict their artistic calling while still adhering to cultural expectations of femininity — or, increasingly, subverting those expectations.

About This Life: Journeys on the Threshold of Memory, by Barry Lopez (Knopf, $24)

BARRY LOPEZ has made a name observing and reflecting on the natural world and humans' relationship to it. In this collection of essays, Lopez gathers thoughts closer to home; this is an autobiography of sorts, though it doesn't have the usual shape of one. He reflects on a childhood spent in two very different landscapes: the farming country of the northern San Fernando Valley, where "adventure unfolded in fruit orchards and wisteria hedges . . . and where encounters with coyotes, jackrabbits, and even rattlesnakes were not unusual," and the density of Manhattan, "where no one bicycled alone at night to the sound of big sprinklers slow-chucking water over alfalfa fields." Fans of Lopez's travel and nature writing will find plenty of both, mixed in with deeply personal reflections on memory, his mother's death, writing.

Final Vinyl Days and Other Stories, by Jill McCorkle (Algonquin, $18.95)

EVEN when the stories in this collection deal with serious themes, characters are offbeat, a bubble or two shy of level. In the first story, "Paradise," Adam meets Eve (once Eve Lyn, now Evelyn) at a wedding, where a member of the groom's party passes out at the altar. "During the vows, someone from the congregation tiptoed up and, as inconspicuously as possible, checked his pulse and then rolled him under the front pew where his head rested next to great-grandmother's walker." Adam and Eve take up with one another (despite the inevitable jokes) and soon enough — after a six-month long-distance relationship — the two are married and journeying to the world of "subdivisions and cocktail parties, fields, forests, temptations and promises." In the title story the narrator works in a used record store for far too long, watching his musical heroes — Roy Orbison, Del Shannon, Marvin Gaye — die, CDs replace LPs, and the girls get younger and younger.

The Goldilocks story is fine until the bears get the bill for their porridge, warns **Larry Elliott**

Fairytale with an unhappy ending

THE United States is the Goldilocks economy. It is enjoying the perfect recovery, with low inflation and falling unemployment. Like baby bear's porridge, it is neither too hot nor too cold but just right.

That is a nice fairytale, but unfortunately it leaves out one factor — namely how the three bears managed to pay for their porridge.

In the case of the US, the answer is that they are *not* paying for it. Daddy bear heads off to the supermarket with an Amex gold card and says, "Charge it!"

Last week the US government released figures showing that it had a trade deficit in May of $15.7 billion — the largest on record, and much higher than the markets had expected. However, Wall Street took the dreadful numbers in its stride, and the Dow Jones index rose after the news.

But some analysts are starting to wake up to the fact that there is a big problem brewing. Gavyn Davies, of Goldman Sachs, for one, believes that the deterioration in the balance sheet of the US private sector is a warning that should be heeded.

Noting that the private sector is running a significant and rising deficit, Mr Davies says: "This is an unusual occurrence which has generally led to trouble when it has occurred in other Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development countries."

Private sector expenditure in the US is exceeding private sector income by around 2.5 per cent of gross domestic product each year. The result — as Mr Micawber would say — is misery. But perhaps not yet.

For the time being, according to Goldman Sachs, the trade deficit is being financed by capital inflows from overseas, which is attracted by high US asset prices. These capital inflows keep the dollar strong, which in turn keeps the lid on domestic inflation.

The US Federal Reserve, seeing no increase in price pressure, refrains from raising interest rates, thereby further boosting equity prices.

Can this go on indefinitely? Undoubtedly not. Professor Tim Congdon of Lombard Street Research in London is predicting a cumulative trade deficit of up to $250 billion this year, rising to $300 billion in 1999.

The US is already the world's biggest debtor nation, and will have to sell off even more of its assets in order to finance its current account deficit. Indeed, according to Prof Congdon, the US's negative position on investments by the turn of the century may be a staggering $2,000 billion.

"To prevent the external debt running out of control, exports will need to grow faster than imports for an extended period. But this will require a drastic wrench to the growth pattern enjoyed over the last six years," he says.

The warning signs are clear. As analysts at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson note, there is "the possibility of a sharp sell-off of Wall Street as investors acknowledge that the long-term earnings expectations built into the current market valuation are wholly unrealistic. We certainly consider this to be the case." So when will the music stop? Nobody knows for sure, but at some point it most certainly will.

When it does, there is a real risk that the global economy will be plunged into the third leg of the crisis that began in Thailand a little over a year ago. A falling stock market will undermine both consumer and business confidence in the US, which, in turn, will intensify the blow to world output.

Meanwhile the inevitable decline in the dollar will make life almost intolerably hard for those Asian countries trying to use devaluations as a way of exporting their way out of trouble.

The fear is that a plunging US dollar would trigger a further round of competitive devaluations — including China this time — with the direst consequences for global growth and employment.

The Asian recession is proving far more severe than expected a year ago.

Dresdner Kleinwort Benson is forecasting GDP to contract by 20 per cent in Indonesia, 11.6 per cent in Thailand and 7.5 per cent in South Korea this year, and by 15 per cent, 7 per cent and 10.5 per cent respectively next year. These are frightening numbers.

DKB adds: "The Japanese situation looks extremely worrying. 'Head winds' are bearing down on aggregate demand and activity, which are very powerful. First and foremost is the fact that corporate profits are under massive downward pressure."

Actually, corporate profits appear to be under pressure just about everywhere. Last week, for example, the British Chambers of Commerce issued a warning about plunging profit margins; Siemens said that Asian firms were flooding the market with computer chips at "suicidal prices"; and manufacturers of branded goods fought off attempts by supermarkets to sell their products at discount prices.

> **When the music stops in the US the global economy may plunge into the third leg of the Asia-Pacific crisis**

The intriguing question is whether falling corporate profitability is merely a cyclical phenomenon, or something more structural.

For two centuries capitalism has been supremely good at making itself more efficient and productive. It has been possible to get more from less, and with increased supply matched by rising demand, there have been some happy times when consumer prices have been falling, profits increasing and wages rising.

But this presupposes that demand keeps up with supply, and that capital has been willing to share some of the spoils with labour. The technological revolution of the past 15 years has definitely made corporations more productive — vastly more so in many cases.

However, while the potential to supply has increased, demand in growth has been muted, and an imbalance has been created. Ironically, this problem has been created by the supporters of free markets who have insisted that controls on the free movement of capital should be abandoned.

Policymakers are constantly looking over their shoulders for an attack from financial speculators, and thus have a bias towards deflation. It is as if a car designer gave a new model a more aerodynamic design but at the same time took out the brake pedal with the result that far from driving faster, motorists would proceed at a snail's pace to avoid a crash.

Surpluses are certainly building up. There is a massive over-supply of cars, steel, computer chips and software.

As William Greider says in his book, One World, Ready Or Not: "All companies are thus caught in a continuing scramble to avoid holding the surpluses, protecting themselves by closing factories in a timely manner or unloading excess goods at prices that injure their rivals.

"To preserve their position, they are compelled to keep doing more of the same: more cost reduction and price-cutting, and in turn more expansion of potential supply. The circle continues, with its destructive element concealed by the fabulous expansiveness of the system."

Now there is nothing especially original about this analysis. Indeed, a chap called Karl Marx came up with something very similar 150 years ago, in which he predicted that falling profit shares would lead to capitalism becoming ever more virulent, creating reserve armies of the unemployed as entrepreneurs sought to cut costs.

Of course, Marx is deeply unfashionable these days, but it is hard not to think that the old chap may have had a point.

We have the attempts by multinational companies to prise open new markets through free-trade agreements; efforts by companies to secure monopoly profits — either by mergers or by forcing rivals out of the market; and a drive towards the bottom in terms of shifting industrial production to sites where labour standards are ignored and the environment can be despoiled.

To many this sounds alarmist. Most of Marx's predictions did not come true, not least because — as economist Lester Thurow says — "the rich were smarter than Marx believed. They understood their own long-term survival depended on eliminating revolutionary conditions — and they did."

It is also the case that most of Marx's historical predictions did not come true. Karl Popper, one of Marx's fiercest critics, expressed it in these terms: "Means of production have accumulated and the productivity of labour has increased since [Marx's] day, to an extent which he would hardly have thought possible.

"But child labour, working hours, the agony of toil and the precariousness of the worker's existence have not increased; they have declined. I do not say that this process must continue. There is no law of progress: everything will depend on ourselves."

Ultimately it comes down to this. You can think (a) that late 20th century capitalism, give or take a bit of cronyism in Asia, is broadly stable and sound; (b) that it is in need of constant intervention and reform to make it stable and sound; or (c) that it is riddled with its own internal contradictions and is thus inevitably doomed.

For at least a century, policymakers have tended towards option (b) with competition laws, progressive taxation, welfare systems, full employment and so on designed to prevent option (a) from turning into option (c).

Like Goldilocks, they have not stuck around long enough to find out whether bears are actually friendly when you get to know them. They have assumed correctly that they tend to be hungry, angry and dangerous.

In Brief

MICROSOFT, the world's most successful information technology firm, revealed a 28 per cent rise in turnover last year, to $14.4 billion. After-tax profits rose to $4.49 billion.

WORLDCOM'S takeover of MCI Communications Corporation won additional approval from US anti-trust authorities, clearing a major regulatory hurdle to the deal, which was originally valued at $37 billion.

BRITISH Energy and its American joint-venture partner, Peco, in a deal worth up to $82 million, are to buy an operating nuclear power plant on Three Mile Island, scene of the US's worst nuclear accident.

THE British Post Office, which is struggling to wrest its commercial freedom from government, reported record profits, 400 new jobs — and a move to reduce the number of Royal Mail lorries on the road. Pre-tax profit rose 12.8 per cent during 1997/98 to $1.1 billion.

TWELVE of the worst offenders in the pensions mis-selling scandal, including Prudential, were taken off the British government's list of shame after meeting deadlines for compensating victims.

BRITISH Biotech, the drugs development company, reported losses of almost $82 million, $26 million more than last year. The company, which has yet to bring a product to market, has never made a profit in its 10-year history.

A HIGH-POWERED committee of backbench MPs urged a shake-up of the Bank of England's interest-rate setting committee amid growing fears that its tough stance on rates risks tipping the UK economy into recession.

ASIA'S economic crisis has left hamburger chain McDonald's facing a local difficulty in Indonesia — a Big Mac now costs two days' wages.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates July 20	Sterling rates July 13
Australia	2.6169-2.6208	2.6712-2.6772
Austria	20.62-20.64	20.82-20.86
Belgium	60.43-60.52	61.01-61.13
Canada	2.4503-2.4525	2.4263-2.4286
Denmark	11.16-11.17	11.27-11.28
France	9.82-9.83	9.91-9.93
Germany	2.9312-2.9336	2.9603-2.9634
Hong Kong	12.77-12.77	12.72-12.73
Ireland	1.1659-1.1673	1.1757-1.1781
Italy	2,890-2,893	2,917-2,922
Japan	228.96-229.23	231.23-231.53
Netherlands	3.3042-3.3068	3.3369-3.3398
New Zealand	3.1172-3.1249	3.1742-3.1804
Norway	12.36-12.38	12.58-12.60
Portugal	299.86-300.18	302.79-303.14
Spain	248.74-248.99	250.99-251.23
Sweden	12.99-13.01	13.20-13.22
Switzerland	2.4749-2.4777	2.4990-2.5022
USA	1.6484-1.6493	1.6417-1.6427
ECU	1.4846-1.4864	1.4968-1.4991

FTSE100 Share Index up [illegible] at [illegible]. FTSE 250 Index up 71.[illegible] at [illegible].

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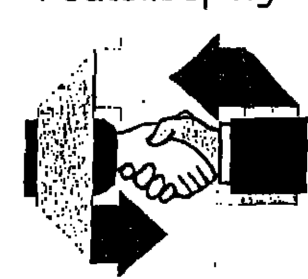
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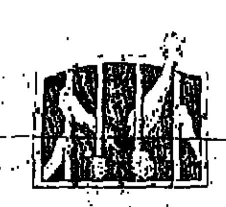


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Two cultures in one domain

Miroslav Holub

MIROSLAV Holub, who has died aged 74 in Prague, was in the judgment of Ted Hughes "one of the half dozen most important poets writing anywhere" and of Al Alvarez "one of the sanest voices of our time".

Born in Plzen, where his father was a lawyer for the railways and his mother was a language teacher, Holub was primarily a scientist, an immunologist, and started writing poetry in only his 30s. After being conscripted to work on the railways in the war, he studied medicine at Charles University, Prague.

Indeed he was 35 when his first book of poetry was published. Numerous interviewers have asked him about these two sides of his personality: he never saw any conflict between them.

I always thought that, in this respect, he was a Renaissance man, a creative person for whom the "two cultures" did not represent separate domains. Holub's occasional use of a scientific vocabulary is not unlike the use by John Donne and some of his contemporaries of "spheres", "hemispheres" or the new language of astronomy and navigation in their poetry. As an immunologist his output was prodigious — more than 150 learned papers and a standard monograph, Immunology Of Nude Mice (1989) — but, outside a narrow circle of specialists, Holub's international fame rests on his poetry. Although this is often quirky and surrealist, it is eminently translatable. Holub is not so much a Czech poet as an international poet who happens to write in Czech.

In the 1970s his poetry was widely published in English and in 37 other languages, but not in Czechoslovakia. When, during a period of thaw, his first book for 10 years appeared in a small edition in 1982, it sold out in a day but could not be republished "due to the paper shortage".

It is not difficult to see why the communist regime regarded him with suspicion or even downright hostility. Many of his poems deal with truth as something that cannot be manipulated or commanded by those in power. In Zito The Magician, the magician is quite happy to amuse His Royal Majesty by changing "water into wine, frogs into footmen, beetles into bailiffs" and a rat into a minister. But when asked to "think up sine alpha greater than one",

Zito grows pale and sad.
Terribly sorry. Sine is
between plus one and minus one.
Nothing you can do about that.
And he leaves the great royal
empire, quietly weaves his way
through the throng of courtiers,
to his home in a nutshell.

The authorities always had an uneasy feeling that in his surrealist way Holub might be poking fun of them. When in one of his poems he spoke of "a crowd of dwarfs [applauding] in the king's palace", he was, somewhat to his surprise, summoned to the censor's office. It turned out that many of the members of the Communist Party Central Committee were rather short and that the passage would therefore have to be changed.

Holub was not an active dissident, not an outspoken opponent of the regime, like Václav Havel. His persecution was the kind of surrealist harassment that he might himself have thought up in his poetry. But when he, together with some other suspects, was expelled from the research institute of the Academy of Sciences where he was working (and to which he returned after the fall of communism) and sent to another less prestigious institute, where he stayed for 18 years, he was — since officially he had already been "punished" — able to continue with his research.

He not only did not join the Communist party but also refused to join the Writers' Union; hence, officially, he was not a writer — and as he was not a writer why should any publisher publish his work? Thus, when Bloodaxe Books in 1984 wanted to publish Holub's collected poems they were not permitted to do so: "collected" was an honour reserved to the most distinguished writers, and Holub was not a member of the Writers' Union. But, with the surrealist absurdity which characterised much of the system, there was no objection to the volume being published in two halves, without the title "Collected", so long as the second half was published (1994) before the first half (1987).

Holub . . . before the thaw in Czechoslovakia, his poetry was published in 38 languages, but not his own PHOTO: KIPPA MATTHEWS

HOLUB was first introduced to English readers in 1967 (Selected Poems) in Penguin's now defunct Modern European Poetry series. This was followed in 1971 by Although, and in 1977 by Notes Of A Clay Pigeon, a pun on Holub's name, which means "pigeon" in Czech. In 1984, Bloodaxe Books published On The Contrary, and Other Poems in 1987, The Fly, followed in 1990 by Poems Before And After, which brought together most of the poems published earlier, and some additional ones.

A collection of prose pieces, originally newspaper columns, The Jingle Bell Principle, came out in 1992, followed in 1996 by his delightful prose-and-poetry tribute to his native city, Supposed To Fly. Faber meanwhile had published his essays, The Dimension Of The Present Moment (1990), Vanishing Lung Syndrome (1990) and The Rampage (1997).

Miroslav Holub's wry humour was inward-turned. He was not given to laughter and perhaps barely to smiles. But his conversation was as surrealist and absurdist as his writing, a firework of ideas and originality that occasionally needed a double-take for comprehension. He was easy to get on with.

We sometimes read together at literary festivals, at Cambridge and Cheltenham. I remember one occasion when a lady offered to put us both up in her "cottage". Miroslav and I had amusedly embarrassed expectations of ending up together in a small room. But the cottage turned out to be a spacious house.

On another occasion we had been working at his house in Prague on his new — by modern standards very primitive — computer, when lightning struck an overhead electric cable and we lost two hours' work. Had I been alone I would have screamed. But Miroslav made some quip about the nature of electricity and said he would just have to start again from scratch.

He was married three times. He leaves his third wife, Jitka, and three children.

Ewald Osers

Miroslav Holub, poet and scientist, born September 23, 1923; died July 14, 1998

Courtesies of the House

Lord Boyd Carpenter

THE HOUSE of Commons likes its gladiators. In the 1950s, it was well served by Richard Crossman for Labour and for the Conservatives by John Boyd-Carpenter, who has died aged 90. Both had sharp minds and a taste for controversy. The Guardian's Norman Shrapnel, arguably the most acute commentator of his day, judged Boyd-Carpenter as "word perfect, aggressively courteous".

Throughout his 27 years in the Commons — on back or frontbench, in government or opposition — he maintained these qualities.

He was born to a political family: his father served in the Commons, and his grandfather was a distinguished Bishop of Ripon. Education at Stowe was followed by Balliol College, Oxford, and eventually the Middle Temple in 1934.

He had barely begun his legal career before the onset of the second world war. Enlistment in the Scots Guards was followed by service in the legal branch of the Allied military government in Italy. He left the Army to fight the 1945 general election in Kingston-upon-Thames, a seat that he served until 1972 when he was elevated to the House of Lords. Despite a successful business career he was an assiduous attender and frequent contributor to the upper chamber.

He married Margaret (Molly) Hall in 1937 and they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary last year. She survives him, together with a son and two daughters. The younger, Baroness Hogg, was head of John Major's policy unit during his first five years in No 10.

John Biffen

John Archibald Boyd-Carpenter, politician, born June 2, 1908; died July 11, 1998

CLASSIFIED



Allez France . . . Lilian Thuram celebrates victory — as do his family and friends in the Guadeloupe village of Anse Bertrand. President Chirac (far right) joins in too PHOTOGRAPHS. JOHN SIBLEY/LYNNE SLADKY/THOMAS KIENZLE

French cup of joy overflows

The World Cup triumph of France's multi-ethnic football team has united the nation. And it could herald the start of a new era, writes **Nick Fraser**

SOME hours before the match started, sitting in a Left Bank café, I began to think that something might have changed in France. I had never seen French people so happy with each other. Tricolore flags were stuck through every car window, and there were honkings and bursts of the Marseillaise at each Paris traffic light. Every form of get-up, from Christian Dior to tie-dye, was on display. Everywhere I looked people were kissing each other; everyone, even the waiters, seemed laid back. In the summer heat, as people lingered in groups around Les Invalides, walking slowly to the Seine and the Champs-Elysées, it became possible to understand what it must have felt like to have been in the city on August 21, 1944, the day of liberation.

As I walked around the crowds, however, I noticed something else. There were many Arabs and blacks, and many of them were carrying tricolore flags. In normal times, they were penned into such places as Sarcelles, St Denis or Belleville, long ago deserted by God and white Frenchmen. They came into the city to sweep the streets, or sometimes, if they were young and among the more than 30 per cent unemployed, to break windows and torch cars.

For white French, Arabs had become an object of anxiety or, if they were among the 15 per cent of the electorate voting for the racist National Front, of fear or hatred. During the early rounds of the World Cup, France's Arabs had supported Morocco or Tunisia, but now they were here *en famille*, carrying the tricolore. Many young Arabs were wearing Zidane shirts, and looked like any other French fan. Groups of white fans honked and shouted at groups of Arabs. *"Allez la France,"* they cried, *"Allez les bleus"* or *"On gagne avec Zizou"*. Near the Hotel de Ville I overheard an elderly lady talking to two Arab girls. "If we win it will be because of you," she said. "You know we should have had blacks and Arabs in the team earlier. If we had done we might have won more matches."

When I heard the astonishing "Aaah . . ." that greeted Zidane's second goal, I knew that nothing would ever be the same again.

Depressed by the pervasiveness of racism among French people, not all of them Front National voters, I had thought at times that France, once supposed to be a beacon for lesser nations, had become a sour backwater. But the Mondial has given me cause for renewed hope.

I recalled a Le Pen supporter I had met a year earlier at a Paris rally. He had been listening to me say in English just how depressed I was by so much hatred. Interrupting, he spoke passionately for almost 10 minutes. I had to understand that one could have grounds for hatred, he said. France was ruined by the arrogance of its ruling élite. No one cared about the fate of the ordinary people, who lost their jobs to foreigners. He had to live in a *cité* — an estate — in the midst of "a pile of dirty people". In Le Pen's France, far from the cafés frequented by the Paris élite, there were people who believed they had lost everything. For them, France didn't really exist any more — it was handed over to international capital, to Jews. It had become a foreign country.

Le Pen indiscriminately fanned the flames of disgruntlement — any pretext would serve his cause. Only two years earlier he had rebuked the French team for their inability to sing the Marseillaise. "It's unnecessary to bring players in from abroad and baptise them as the French team," he told his supporters.

I wondered what he and his supporters thought of the World Cup winners. Labelled *"noir, blanc et bleu"*, the team contained few players who passed the strictest criteria of ethnic Frenchness. Among them was a Basque (Lizarazu); a Breton (Guivarc'h); two Armenians (Boghossian, Djorkaieff); a French Polynesian (Karambeu) and a Guadeloupais (Thuram). Zidane was born in Castellane, a run-down suburb of Marseille, to Algerian immigrant parents. Black stars such as Patrick Thierry, Marcel Desailly and Bernard Diomede were all what Le Pen liked sneeringly to call *"Français de souche recente"* — meaning they and their parents had arrived so recently that they could not be considered as "real" Frenchmen.

Le Pen was quick to claim credit for the World Cup victory. He said he had always recognised that France could be "composed of different races and religions" so long as the new arrivals displayed a proper spirit of patriotism. And he was glad the Marseillaise had this time been sung properly. Meanwhile he pompously denigrated the World Cup, with the insulting word that he had used about the Holocaust — it was a "detail" in the history of nations, no more.

Could something as ephemeral as football change the affairs of a nation? Even if they didn't think so, most French commentators saw a parallel between the round leather ball and the wider universe implied by the existence of France. This Is For Eternity was the headline of the sporting daily L'Equipe, which had until recently criticised the team for lack of inspiration. Writing in the conservative Le Figaro, the Gaullist Sinologist Alain Peyrefitte entitled his editorial The Lesson. While acknowledging the talents of the team, he recalled the imperatives of unity. France can only be multi-racial because she has always refused to be "multi-cultural" or "multi-ethnic". One might play in front or behind, he observed, but it was still football. And that had been the story of the French nation; it had done best while playing as an ensemble.

Well, French people never were ensemble players, as the real history of the country showed, century after century. I didn't believe in the analogies between national character and football. The idea that nations, like teams, could be put together seemed far-fetched. But I did acknowledge that football might have changed France.

These days people express their feelings more readily, and with greater facility. They also change their minds more rapidly — particularly about race. This was apparent in the results of a survey of French attitudes to race, commissioned by the government and published recently. On the face of it, the results were alarming — 38 per cent declared themselves racist, almost twice as high a proportion of the population as in Britain or Germany. An additional high percentage said they might become racist.

But when different questions were asked, such as whether foreigners contributed to French life, or whether they should receive the same rights under the law as the native French, the result, if not wholly encouraging, was at least comparable to other European countries. Meanwhile inter-marriage was increasingly common, and it seemed as if, year by year, racial hostility was diminishing.

The idea of difference, it seemed, caused the French mind to seize up. This was behind the entirely laudable idea that Frenchness, like citizenship, could be acquired — and it reflected the ease with which France had in the past accepted foreigners. But it also explained the difficulty experienced by foreigners when they sought to become integrated. For no French man or woman really believed in a multi-cultural France. They left what they considered to be grotesque illusions to Americans, Britons and Dutch. Outside the hard core of racists who supported Le Pen, French people probably merely wanted foreigners to be more like them. They were accordingly horrified when young Arabs burnt cars or placed bombs in the path of the high-speed train — and they responded by wanting their France rid of the plague of foreigners.

BUT le foot was an easy and quick road to Frenchness. Loving the game, wishing they had invented it, the French never really excelled at it — and they put this down to their own character failings of impulsiveness. Football was more cherished than any number of failing national icons such as the Frontist Brigitte Bardot, or the once ubiquitous dark Gauloises. And the ultimate football success spelt flair and triumph at a time when these qualities had not been evident in France.

The World Cup won't stop people voting for Le Pen, and it certainly won't put an end to the ghettoisation of the *banlieue* — the suburbs. But it will affect the way the French think about themselves. In Marseille a mural of the team hung for a month without being defaced by a single scribble. Players such as Lilian Thuram and Zinedine Zidane will become role models for the kids of the *banlieue* where they had grown up. But they are important for a different reason. By winning they had also convinced French people of their worth. They will be remembered for this long after many mediocre politicians are forgotten, as true French heroes and not as foreigners. As Zola once said, the purpose of democracy was to make people feel a little less different from each other. In our time such minor miracles are performed not by democracy, but by sport.



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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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By China's Pearl River, the world's biggest city is fast taking shape. **Jonathan Glancey** visits the ugly, thrilling mass

One day, all this will be offices

HONG KONG is facing the most severe recession it can remember, and the days of speed-of-light development are, for the moment at least, history. Much of Southeast Asia is suffering an economic hangover.

Yet just over the border, in one of the last strongholds of communism, things could hardly be more different. If it wasn't for the mountains in between, you could see the city of Shenzhen from the windows of any Hong Kong skyscraper.

Shenzhen is its mirror image, a metropolis that has appeared from nowhere, almost overnight. Only 15 years ago, this former fishing village on the east bank of the mighty Pearl River had a population of just 30,000. Today, it is a towering home to more than 3 million, and it is growing at a phenomenal pace, spreading its tentacles north and west along the new Hopewell Highway. Within 10 years, the Chinese government hopes, the communities linked by this private toll road will form the greatest city on earth, home to 40 million people and the powerhouse of the nation.

Not a pretty city like Florence, Munich or Edinburgh, but an oriental Gotham shooting high into a filthy industrial sky, a conurbation — no, a megalopolis — that threatens to smother thousands of square miles of paddy fields, hills and meadows beside the Pearl River, as it flows in muddy, contaminated channels down from the mountains of Guandong Province, through the city of Guangzhou and finally out to the South China Sea.

Not a pretty city but a megalopolis, an oriental Gotham shooting high into a filthy industrial sky

This city — I christen it the Pearl River City — won't exist in anything like its final form for another 10 or 15 years, yet businessmen are making it a reality quicker than you can say "To get rich is glorious" — as Deng Xiaoping said when he came this way in 1992 and instigated this remarkable experiment in urban sprawl, economic growth and social change.

Today this loose-knit collection of towns and cities is the fastest-growing area in the world. "Where else can you see this kind of growth?" asks Sir Gordon Wu, the Hong Kong developer who, by accident rather than design, the Chinese government has allowed to spearhead the project. "Up to 20 per cent a year — it's phenomenal."

It was Wu who came up with the idea for the Hopewell Highway. He once promised fellow developers that he would throw himself into Hong Kong harbour if he failed to see it through. His own life story is an illustration of the astonishing rise and rise of the Pearl River Delta.

Wu's grandfather was a butcher in Guangzhou; his father, a taxi driver and then the owner of a fleet of taxis in Hong Kong. Today, Sir Gordon is top man in a coterie of capitalist developers who, working closely with communist Beijing, are creating this city on a scale and at a pace that makes the breathless rise of Chicago a century ago seem snail-paced.

It is unprecedented, remarkable and, it has to be said, eye-boggling and more than a little frightening. Riding the Hopewell Highway out of Shenzhen and up along the east banks of the Pearl River to Guangzhou is a surreal experience. To the left and right rise new concrete office blocks, factories and housing blocks as far as the eye can see. Not just dozens of new buildings, nor even hundreds, but thousands.

I travelled this way with Laurence Liauw, a young British-born Chinese architect now living and working in the slump city of Kuala Lumpur. We didn't know whether to laugh or cry at what we saw from the monsoon-lashed windows of our mini-bus. Here was a half-built factory capped with what looked like the dome of St Peter's in Rome. Here was another crowned with, yes, the dome of St Paul's Cathedral in London. There was a vast housing estate in the guise of the Palace of Westminster, complete with a cartoon replica of the Big Ben clocktower.

Look there! A factory at least a kilometre long copied from the designs of the late, great Milanese architect Aldo Rossi. No, look over there! An even bigger factory, its elongated form adopted clumsily from the canon of Richard Meier, the big-shot New York architect. How about one — no, two — cloud-piercing office towers modelled on Sir Norman Foster's Century Tower in Tokyo? Or an apartment block mixing Miami architecture of the eighties with French rococo and 17th century Dutch gables?

Crazy? Perhaps, but what do you expect when you ask your country's youthful architectural profession to build what in 10 or 15 years will be the biggest city in the world? When Liauw and I visited the all-powerful Design Institutes in Shenzhen and Guangzhou, we saw young architects, armed with the latest computer technology, teaching themselves how to develop new and sophisticated buildings and cities that will finally move away from the cartoon styles.



A park in Zongshan ready for capitalist development at its most virile and virulent PHOTOS: JONATHAN GLANCEY

The pace of development in southern China is such that architectural styles that lasted 50 years or more in Europe come and go in less than six months — the time it takes for local architects and contractors to design, build and hand over a 60-storey, air-conditioned skyscraper.

"In 20 years of working in China," Sir Gordon had told me back in Hong Kong, "I've never met a communist." And as we travelled from Hong Kong through Shenzhen to Guangzhou and back down the west side of the Pearl River to Macau, we could see what he meant.

The development of the delta into the megacity of Shenzhen is still something of an experiment in the eyes of the Communist party. Here it has allowed the market economy full rein, so that what you experience is capitalist development at its most virile and virulent. Thrilling and loathsome, admirable and despicable at one and the same time.

And yet, the emerging Pearl River City does not prove that the People's Republic is about to abandon rule from the centre, even less that the Communist party will fall as its comrades did in Moscow and Warsaw, Bucharest and Prague. Beijing still holds the whip hand. Developers, entrepreneurs and city planners dance to the tune of party officials. It's as if Karl Marx and Adam Smith were holding hands and waltzing gaily up and down the length of the Hopewell Highway, communism and capitalism in feverish, fleet-footed embrace.

And while Beijing is happy with the results, nothing can stand in the way of Marx and Smith (and Gordon Wu). Not even mountains. As we drove along the highway, we watched entire hills being swept away. Chinese planners, developers and engineers have no time for the niceties of conservation, planning and landscape. New industrial estates do not follow the contours of the land — they just trample on them. I've never seen anything like it.

"Development is the only way," yell giant posters from the sides of six — and eight-lane concrete highways. Nature and sentimentality cannot be allowed to get in the way of super-charged economic growth; so much so that by the 10th day of our trip up and down the Pearl River Delta, I realised that amidst the cacophony of building — pneumatic drills, jack-hammers, dumper-trucks — I hadn't heard a single bird sing.

When I mentioned this to officials at the planning bureau of Zongshan, a new town that prides itself on its attempt at "green" development, we were rushed off to see and hear birds singing.

Out we drove, past endless new hi-tech factories — where workers from distant provinces toil 12 hours a day in brutal conditions for low wages, making well-known branded goods — into an expansive and brand-new city park. Having circled statues of Minnie Mouse (for it was she) and the Power Rangers (don't ask why), we stopped outside an enormous and rather sad aviary. "There," said our hosts. "Birds."

The conflict — conservation versus development — is a hard one to resolve. There is no question that living standards in this part of southern China have risen sharply. All those finding work here — peasants from Sechuan, farmers from Hunan, cowpokes from Inner Mongolia, all with their different faces and languages — are guaranteed somewhere to live. Those who succeed are now able to buy homes and, from this year, to sell them on and thus move and create capital for themselves and their families.

Children — one per family, says the law — are cosseted and educated in well-equipped new schools (one we visited in Guangzhou had been designed like Sleeping Beauty's castle *à la* Disney). Within months of finding work, rib-thin peasants are earning up to four times what they made at home, sporting fashionable clothes, fake Gucci watches and brandishing mobile phones.

Such is the pace of development and the need for communication that the telephone companies are not even bothering to lay copper cables. Instead, they are erecting transmitter masts, so that people who a year ago had never used a phone are now a technological leap ahead of their European and American contemporaries.

Of course, civil liberties are restricted, as in the rest of China, and no one in their right mind would step out of line. Yet, with reasonable pay, a home of your own and the promise of a car to come, a surplus of food, 24-hour golf and bowling, karaoke in your offices on a Friday night, high-fashion clothes, mobile phones, good schools and little crime, who would worry?

The Pearl River City very nearly exists. Macau returns to China next year, and when the proposed 50km Lingdingyang bridge is constructed and spans the Pearl River Delta from Zhuhai to Hong Kong, all the components will be in place; and this exhausting phenomenon, like it or not, may well become the world's First City.

Yankie takeaway . . . a fast food outlet in Shenzhen and, right, The Windows On The World theme park

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Letter from Vietnam Patricia Nicholson

Free for some but not for all

LAUGHING, I swept grandly up the emperor's wide granite stair case flanked by dragons, while Tuan stalked up the narrower steps assigned to mandarins. We were in the 19th century imperial tomb of Emperor Minh Mang, just outside the old city of Hue, and the separate ascents struck us as funny because Tuan, my Vietnamese guide, had in fact been a mandarin. Before liberation he had been a senior civil servant in the south Vietnamese administration.

He brought me to see the tombs on the back of a Honda 125 motorbike, what they call *xi om* (hug ride). The hug is less of amorous intent than to stay on the back while bouncing at speed over potholes and through puddles. Many tombs, complete with pavilions, temples and gardens, had to be built for the emperors of the prolific Nguyen dynasty — a name more common than Smith in England. They ruled the country with elaborate pomp and ceremony until Bao Dai, the unlucky 13th, became a puppet of the French regime and finally abdicated in 1945. He died in France aged over 90.

Tuan speaks both French and English. This is not unusual for an experienced tourist guide, but his crisp white shirt and neatly knotted tie are. Old habits die hard, but in other ways he has had to be flexible and resourceful: two common qualities among the Vietnamese who have had to cope with contradictory systems of communist politics and capitalist economics since the introduction in the eighties of *doi moi* (renovation or new thinking).

After liberation Tuan was unable to get a job in the state sector where most of the jobs are. He is employed as a receptionist in a small hotel. The guide-on-a-motorbike service is his own sideline, which his boss allows because he cannot afford to pay him enough. Having two or even three jobs is not unusual, especially among state employees, and tourism is now providing additional income.

Almost 1.5 million visitors came to Vietnam last year, not counting the 160,000 expatriates working here. This is a staggering increase on the 450,000 who came in 1992, when most local investment in tourist facilities started. Low-paid state employees such as teachers, policemen and local officials are prominent among the new mini-hotel owners in holiday spots like Bai Chay in Halong Bay. These mini-hotels are private homes that have had a floor or two added to provide extra bedrooms to let. Rows of these tall, narrow, three-storey houses — with a clear expectation of a fourth being added as family fortunes permit — indicate increasing prosperity in many urban areas.

The Vietnamese are nothing if not enterprising. In Hoi An last September, I was stranded in a storm that caused widespread flooding. Hoi An was an important Asian trading port in the 17th century. Many old buildings remain and it is a popular spot for day-trips from Danang and China Beach to the north. During a week of heavy rain, local children did a roaring trade selling $1 plastic rain coats. Floodwaters forced waterfront restaurants to close, but boatwomen from villages across the river quickly offered boat trips for tourists to see inside their flooded homes.

Buying and selling seem inseparable from the Asian spirit. It is no less so among the ethnic minorities in the mountain areas, who have for centuries traded across the mountains of Indochina. For them, tourism is becoming less a job and more a way of life as their picturesque lifestyle attracts streams of tourists into their fields and homes. These seekers after authentic culture come in small groups or independently, with or without tour guides, and often unannounced. Each fresh-faced arrival may not realise they are the fourth or fifth curious party to stroll into the village that morning. Many guided tours in the northern town of Sa Pa "offer" five different ethnic groups in a three-day trek. Few visitors buy local products. They take their photos and trek off with little or no compensation to the local inhabitants. But in Sa Pa strangers are constantly ambushed by craft sellers, mostly women and girls. The people are poor, competition is keen and much skilled craftwork is sold too cheaply through middle-men to souvenir shops, which reap the benefits.

Doi moi has created jobs and brought relative prosperity to many. Tourism development has been an important part of that process, even though the market is now increasingly dominated by foreign corporations. As one mini-hotel owner put it: "In the 1980s we hit rock-bottom, there wasn't even enough food. Now life is better and it is still improving." But free market is as much a misnomer as free lunch. The free-for-all doesn't start on an equal footing. Without social and economic safeguards, ethnic minorities, at the centre of attraction but on the periphery of economic benefits, could get trampled underfoot.



Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHAT is the most blatantly wrong decision ever made by a referee in a major football match?

RED CARD right there for contesting the referee's decision. — *Pol Sigerson, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*

AROUND three years ago, in a Scottish Premier League match (no cheap shots about major matches, please) at Firhill, a Dundee United player blasted the ball into the Partick Thistle net. It rebounded and a Thistle man caught it and threw it to his goalkeeper, who kicked it upfield. Referee Les Mottram (who officiated at the 1994 World Cup) gave neither the goal nor the penalty for hand ball and play continued. For sheer incompetence, I suspect this is difficult to beat. — *Andy Buchanan, London*

IT IS a close call between the Hand of God (1986 World Cup); West German goalkeeper Harold Schumacher's unpunished assault on French midfielder Patrick Battiston (1982); and permitting Taribo West's haircut (1998). — *John Haigh, Brighton, East Sussex*

THERE are 17, all of equal stupidity. And they were all given against Sunderland last season. — *Chris Stewart, Ponteland, Northumberland*

HOW does one classify something as a vitamin, and have we "discovered" all of them?

VITAMINS are defined as naturally occurring organic substances (so distinguishing them from trace minerals) required in the diet in very small amounts (so distinguishing them from fats, carbohydrates and proteins).

There are 13 essential to human beings (the last to be discovered was B6 in the fifties). We know that this is the lot because human beings can survive on purified diets so long as the 13 are included (as in tube-feeding for special patients and in liquid diets tried out on astronauts). — *Prof Arnold Bender, Leatherhead, Surrey*

VITAMINS are substances which make you ill if you do not have enough of them. They are classified as nutrients, but although Vitamin D is found in fish liver and can be artificially added to food, it is actually a hormone triggered by exposure of the skin to sunlight. We will only know if any more vitamins exist if someone discovers and defines an illness that can be prevented by eating a substance found in food, which we have not yet described. Of course you can also get ill from lack of certain amino acids, fats and minerals so the substance would have to be not one of these. — *G Palmer, Shanghai, China*

ALMOST all dogs eat "anything". Why, then, are they so fussy about fruit?

MY MOTHER'S German Shepherd, who lived with her in Spain, ate all kinds of fruit. Even masses of cherries with the stones still in them did not cause him any problem. But he was always very peculiar with almonds. He took them only fresh from the tree, chosen by himself. He did chew them, but then spat out nine out of ten. What I always found most amazing was that he would leave alone any piece of meat if he could get a wasp or a bee. — *Anuschka Tischer, Kessenicherstr, Bonn, Germany*

Any answers?

HOW do I get a life? — *Helen Walmsley, Preston, Lancashire*

WHICH playing card is known as the curse of Scotland and why? — *Eileen Pattison, Richmond, Yorkshire*

WHAT is the point of string vests? Who invented them? Are they fashionable? — *Matt Wait, West Wickham, Kent*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/



Severe pruning . . . Allotments are being squeezed out in favour of golf courses PHOTOGRAPH: GLEB KOSORUKOV

Russia's small farmers feel the squeeze

Tom Whitehouse

RUSSIA'S most successful pop singer, Alla Pugachova, paid for road improvements to buy off local people who opposed her building a garish red-brick home in the countryside. The villagers now have better access to the shops, and she can get to and from Moscow faster.

But not everyone is happy. Moscow's growing ranks of subsistence farmers, who commute each day to allotments on the city's outskirts, see Pugachova and her like as a threat to their livelihoods. The picturesque spots that the New Russians want for weekend retreats lie on the fertile land they need to survive.

Millions of Russians now return to the land that their peasant grandparents abandoned. Once Russia's 11 million allotments brought variety and vitamins to the sausage-heavy Soviet diet. Now they are the mainstay of subsistence farming in a country where sausages have become a luxury.

"We gardeners get bad, wet land because the New Russians have bought the best plots," says Yevgeny Blyano, chairman of an allotment co-operative in Solnechnogorsk, close to Villa Pugachova.

Getting land and permission to build on it is a simple matter of bribery. "In theory of course, access to land is equal and you're not supposed to be able to buy land," he says. "But in reality the rich have ways of persuading the local authorities to grant them the land they want."

The post-Soviet countryside is being assaulted on all sides. The New Russian rich want golf courses, country clubs and their own *kot-edshi* (the Russian pronunciation of cottage, which refers to big Westernised red-brick mansions). Poor city-dwellers want allotments. The locals just want to be left alone.

"In the summer the population trebles and we have anarchy," says Vladimir Popov, director of Solnechnogorsk region, north of Moscow. "Muscovite gardeners just throw their rubbish away in the woods, destroying our natural beauty. We have to pay to clean things up."

At least the rich help pay for their debris by bringing money into the region. "New Russians support local shops and sometimes even improve the infrastructure," says Mr Popov. "The gardeners spend nothing here. They only take things away."

In the past seven years 12 per cent of Solnechnogorsk has disappeared under luxury housing developments, squeezing out allotments. Subsistence farmers are fighting a losing battle for the land they need to feed themselves.

The new multi-storey dacha blocks guzzle water and cast long shadows over neighbouring land, making it less fertile.

The landless are forced to improvise. In one national park, 650km north of Moscow, wardens turn a blind eye to city potato-planters in return for a share of their produce.

"I do not like the way things are going," says Mr Popov, revealing his blueprint for a new leisure complex in Solnechnogorsk. "But it's inevitable that country regions close to Moscow will be taken over by the leisure industry, while gardeners are pushed further and further away."

An African star shoots into the limelight

ROCK
Robin Denselow

IT HAS been a long journey, but Baaba Maal is finally established as the greatest African performer of the nineties, and the latest major Third World contender for star status in the West. This gig at London's Festival Hall was a crucial show for him, following the release of his long-awaited, deliberately commercial but not always successful new album Nomad Soul, and he proved triumphantly that he doesn't need all those expensive producers. He is even better heard live, for he has an exhilarating spontaneity, energy and passion that can only be hinted at on record. It's often hard to coax even a packed-out, excited Festival Hall audience to get out of their seats and dance, but Maal managed it almost at once.

Preceded by talking-drummers parading around the hall, and children joining the percussionists on stage, he came on barefoot, in the first of a series of flowing robes, almost physically hurling himself into the first song with an attack that was never to let up. A slight, wiry, wildly energetic figure, he had a voice that ought to come from a man five times his size. Harsh-edged and percussive, it dominated his band, with its mixture of African and Western instruments, with the drummers and harp-like kora matched against saxophones and synthesizer.

Maal's music is special because of its range, and the way he has fused old and the very new, mixing traditional melodies and rhythms from his home town of Podor in Senegal, with R&B, reggae, rap, Latin, even Irish balladry. Talking to him earlier, he explained how he had travelled across West Africa to study the music and how he now listens to music from all over the world, finding that "in Senegal we can listen to any music and see its place alongside our music".

All of that came together in this set. It has become customary that Maal includes an acoustic, traditional selection in the middle of his show, in which he calms down and swops duets with his old friend, the blind singer and guitarist Mansour Seck. This time they were joined by the virtuoso Jamaican jazz guitarist Ernest Ranglin, whose album was recorded in Senegal with some of Maal's band. Together they had provided the opening set — the classiest warm-up act that anyone could ask for — and now Ranglin was adding his delicate, rapid-fire solos to the sound of the kora, and Maal and Seck's more laid-back balladry. It was an exquisite, mesmeric moment.

Maal pushed on towards the finale, and some of the more pop-oriented material from the new album. The songs sounded far better live. He was joined by a gospel choir for Cherie, and then he brought on Sinéad O'Connor's female backing singers, the Screaming Orphans. On the album they provide a gentle ballad (in English) which is dissected by Maal's now more funky attack. This wasn't just a great African event, it was one of the shows of the year.

On an island in the Orkneys composer Peter Maxwell Davies lives in a cottage high on a cliff, feeding off the rhythms of the tides. He talks to **Adam Sweeting**

The isle of Hoy is full of noises

PETER Maxwell Davies's photograph in the New Oxford Companion To Music depicts the composer in his fiery youth, sporting bushy avant-garde sideburns and a mop of dark curls.

By contrast, today's Davies is a trim, twinkly-eyed 63-year-old. With his white hair and a face weather-beaten by the rugged climate of his beloved island of Hoy, where he lives in a small cottage perched 60 metres up a cliff, the composer cuts a puckish figure. His life runs more according to the wind and the tides than to the dictates of record companies or concert promoters, and he's more likely to listen to the shipping forecast than to Classic FM. "You can get it up here, but I don't know where it is on the dial," he claims.

It's a cool morning in Stromness, on the mainland of Orkney. Gulls and oystercatchers whirl under a steely-grey sky, scrutinising the fishing boats as they chug up the channel. Davies has taken the early ferry over from Hoy, whose steepling cliffs rear out of the ocean in the distance, and at 9am, I find him ensconced in the living room of his old friends, Archie and Elizabeth Bevan. They regularly host the composer's meetings with the press, for instance during the recent St Magnus Festival on Orkney which he founded in 1977.

"St Magnus is the patron saint of Orkney," explains the composer. "He was a Viking pacifist. The festival started with the opera, The Martyrdom Of St Magnus, which I wrote specially for the occasion in 1977. I did it with the Fires of London ensemble in St Magnus' cathedral in Kirkwall. I conducted it from in front of the pillar where his skull is."

In 20 years, the festival has gained a substantial international reputation, thanks to Davies's ability to entice such weighty guests as Isaac Stern, André Previn, Vladimir Ashkenazy and Jean-Yves Thibaudet, as well as becoming a focal point for the local musical community.

"I insisted that the best of Orkney be on view. Music, drama, artwork, folk history — all those things are very much part of the festival, so that locals feel they are a major part of it and this isn't something being imposed on them. The Orkney festival chorus is flourishing, and the local orchestra can participate in the festival with no qualms whatsoever."

Davies also makes a point of composing regularly for children, because he finds their enthusiastic single-mindedness inspiring, and because they are, hopefully, the musicians of tomorrow. The Blair government's demolition of musical education in schools lends further urgency to his cause, and brings back memories of the struggle he had to further his own musical education in his native Manchester. "We had a headmaster who didn't approve of music very much, and when I suggested that I should do music at O level he said 'This is not a girls' school', so that was that." Undeterred, Davies entered himself for music A level without telling his headmaster, and thanks to his encyclopaedic knowledge of Beethoven's music, he won a Lancashire county music scholarship.

He knows that no outsider can ever qualify as a bona fide Orcadian, but he has blended in as well as any Englishman could. On his first visit to the islands he met the Orcadian novelist and poet Gordon Mackay Brown, and they became close friends. Brown's writings have frequently supplied him with thematic material, not least for 1979's symphonic cantata, Black Pentecost. Davies took the title from Brown's poem, Dead Fires, and its theme from his novel Greenvoe, which anticipated the danger to the islands from industrial conglomerates exploiting the local mineral wealth. Brown wrote his book even before the North Sea oil boom, but Davies adapted the theme as a protest against a proposal to begin open-pit uranium mining on Orkney. It helped to focus local opposition to the plan, which, to widespread relief, was eventually abandoned.

Spiritually, Davies has travelled light years since he was born in Manchester in September 1934. With Harrison Birtwistle and Alexander Goehr, he became known as a member of the "Manchester School", who became associated with the complexities of serialism and with various strains of medieval music. Davies tackled everything from song cycles and chamber works to opera and music-theatre, often embracing themes of insanity and delirium. The story goes that Davies's retreat to Orkney in 1971 marked the end of a fiery, tormented phase in both his music and his personal life, but he's not convinced it's quite that easy.



Davies on Orkney: 'I welcome the insights gained since coming here and I hope they show in the music' PHOTOGRAPH: GUNNIE MOBERG

"I think that's probably a bit simplistic. I know that in 1969 I wrote Eight Songs For A Mad King, Vesalii Icones, Worldes Blis and St Thomas Wake, which are all very dramatic and almost expressionistic. They're certainly very tense pieces. I was burning the candle at at least three ends. I think coming to Orkney was part of a process of becoming more mature, and I know that a lot of people still regret that I don't write the music that I wrote in the sixties. Well that's tough, because I think one does change, one does mature; and this is part of a natural process of growing older.

"I welcome the insights I've gained since coming here and I hope they show in the music. The music that you write is a kind of map of your whole life, and some of it is mapping places where no mind has ever been before. As one grows older that map will become more complete, and the nature of the terrain you're mapping is bound to change, and I think that's natural. It would be dreadful if I was still involved in the problems I was facing in the mid-sixties. You'd be curator of your own museum."

He has been going through a phase of nouveau classicism recently, inspired partly by his rediscovery of the glories of Haydn's string quartets. "It's just the sheer brilliance of the man's musical mind, and I think some of that can't help but rub off," he reckons.

Perhaps there's a little of Haydn's *joie de vivre* in Davies's new Collins Classics recording of Mavis In Las Vegas, though its exuberant, all-American idiom could hardly be further removed from 18th century Vienna. Davies wrote the piece after a 1995 American tour with the BBC Philharmonic, and the title came to him when he discovered that hotels kept registering him, for reasons which remain obscure, as "Mavis".

"I invented this alter ego called Mavis. There are bits of everything in there, from George Gershwin to Duke Ellington to God knows what else. It expresses something of my love-hate relationship with Las Vegas and with the USA, and I think it has an undertone of something quite reflective, even sad. I was a postgraduate student at Princeton university for two years from 1962 to 1964, and it was a big influence on my life. I've been back many times because there's always work in the States."

The dearth of commissions in their homeland is a regular lament of British composers, and Davies is one of many who have found greater hospitality abroad. He has been struck by how much friendlier foreign opera houses are than Covent Garden.

APROPOS the recent Eyre report on the Royal Opera House, he ponders: "As a taxpayer, one does wonder what one's putting one's money into. Prices must come down and you must get ordinary people going. My music theatre and opera pieces are performed a great deal around Europe and one sees all kinds of opera houses, and I must say that my least favourite one from every point of view is Covent Garden. There's a feeling at Covent Garden that even by allowing you through the door, they're doing you a favour. It's institutionalised arrogance, which I find very unpleasant."

He's convinced that opera can and should be an accessible medium, but that might mean making some changes to how it's defined. "The real operas of today are probably Lloyd Webber musicals, and, whatever one thinks of them, they're good theatre. It's middle- and working-class entertainment of the kind people want. It has its place, and I think glancing over one's shoulder at that occasionally would do no harm."

Not that Sir Peter is about to clone Sir Andrew's oeuvre. Currently, he's working on an Antarctic Symphony, which will draw on his recollections of a month-long trip he made to the region. "The silence was something I hadn't experienced before, even in Orkney. The official population of the British Antarctic territories is zero. There's this huge tract of land and sea and frozen wastes, and it's empty. I know it sounds platitudinous, but it does change your life." But can it be expressed in music? He thinks for a moment. "I'm not sure. I'll find out."

Mavis In Las Vegas (BBC Philharmonic, Peter Maxwell Davies, conductor: Collins Classics 16242). Peter Maxwell Davies's website is at www.maxopus.com

The finch mob

THEATRE
Michael Billington

WHAT IS the moral responsibility of the scientist? How do past discoveries affect present behaviour? Is existence too mysterious ever to be fully explained? It can't be pure chance that these are the issues raised by the three most stimulating new plays I have seen this year: Shelagh Stephenson's An Experiment With An Air-Pump, which premiered in Manchester in February; Michael Frayn's Copenhagen, now packing out the Cottesloe, and Timberlake Wertenbaker's After Darwin, at London's Hampstead Theatre, on the cultural legacy of Darwinism.

What this suggests to me is that theatre is moving into new territory: our post-Utopian, post-religious, postmodern world is looking to science to provide the moral conundrums that are the essence of drama.

Like many modern plays, After Darwin has a dual time-frame. On one level, we are watching the developing conflict between Darwin and Robert FitzRoy, the captain of HMS Beagle. FitzRoy is a devout paternalist Tory who comes to believe, by naturally selecting Darwin for the voyage, that he has brought destruction on the world. The shifting balance of power between the two, ending in FitzRoy's tragic suicide in 1859, is fascinating stuff.

In Wertenbaker's drama, we are watching rehearsals of a play about Darwin written by a black American academic, staged by a female Bulgarian director and played by two wildly contrasting actors: Ian, a disaffected theatre veteran, and Tom, a 27, wannabe filmstar. Just as the relationship between Darwin and FitzRoy deteriorates, so does that between the actors when Tom announces he has landed a movie part.

So what is Wertenbaker up to? Part of her purpose is to show how Darwinist theories have been hijacked to justify any form of social selfishness. "The survival of the fittest" (a phrase coined by Herbert Spencer) is used to license any form of rampant individualism. Tom, who plays Darwin, is presented as a stupid, guilt-free individual who suggests the Holocaust may be a fiction, refuses to take an HIV test and puts a play at risk in order to do a bad movie. But then, as Ian says, "In contemporary England, the moral dilemma is an overspecialised refinement that leads rapidly to extinction."

Oddly, this is the weakest area of the play. Tom is made to carry on his fragile shoulders the whole weight of social Darwinism. Wertenbaker also overlooks the point that, ever since the publication of On The Origin Of Species in 1859, people have used Darwin for their own ends. Darwin himself wrote in 1879: "What a foolish view seems to prevail in Germany on the connection between Socialism and evolution through natural selection."

Where Wertenbaker does score is in conveying the physical excitement, and intellectual disturbance, of discovery. The best scene shows Jason Watkins's bright-eyed Darwin presenting Michael Feast's terrified FitzRoy with the fruits of his research on the Galapagos Islands. As he talks about finches, whose beaks are so different from those on the South American coastline as to constitute a new species, you feel a shared frisson. It doesn't worry me at all that Wertenbaker goes on to break up the scene and point the moral: that, from this moment on, the fixed certainties of God, man, England and class are thrown into disarray. She even goes on to imply that artist and scientist are linked by their ability to experience blinding moments of revelation.

Wertenbaker's play may be over-schematic: too many neat parallels between the Darwinist past and the theatrical present, so that even the director turns out to be a young Turk who has had to adapt in order to survive. But it is still a play fired up by the exhilaration of discovery and the possibilities of art. At one point, the dramatist, adapting a theory of Richard Dawkins, suggests: "Human beings have come to the end of their evolution — some say we are even coming to the end of our knowledge — but we will never come to the end of our imagination."



Michael Feast and Jason Watkins in After Darwin PHOTO. TRISTRAM KENTON

What is most significant is the kinship between Wertenbaker's play and those of Frayn and Stephenson. They all take science as their starting point. They all seize on moments in the past that have shaped modern thought. They all deal with the ethical implications of discovery. This suggests that science is a rich, and only partially tapped, source of drama precisely because every innovation has political and religious implications.

Some dramatists have realised this already: Tom Stoppard, Stephen Poliakoff, Tony Harrison and Hugh Whitemore have all written plays with a scientific basis. But Brecht was the great progenitor: in Galileo, he raised the biggest issue of all — is science merely an end in itself, in which case it plays into the hands of those in power, or does it have a utilitarian function whose aim is "to ease human existence?"

That is the question that lurks at the heart of all scientific plays. Given current advances in genetic engineering, environmental control and computerised communication, it is one that throws up moral issues. Theatre is a mansion of many different rooms, from classic revivals and musicals to plays of ideas. On current evidence, however, I would suggest that in the social responsibility of science, and the morality of technological progress, lies the drama of the future.

Cumbrian sausage with Currie sauce

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THE CHAT show is a minefield which has blown the legs off many hosts. *Ruby* (BBC2), like Emerald Cunard between the wars, is a hostess. They have more in common than a flashy first name: both are American.

Neither seem to believe there is such a thing as an unaskable question. To whip conversation to a fine froth may take a peculiarly female skill. It also takes a table.

Most chat shows have a sofa. As more celebrated bottoms arrive, early arrivals must shuffle further into obscurity until they are forgotten. When this happened to a guest at Hearst's newspaper palace, they had to go home.

Ruby has a table. You can put food and drink on a table. With the help of a banana, some strawberries and cream, she illustrated a particularly fruity passage in one of Edwina Currie's novels. Which, she added unflatteringly, she had just read in make-up.

Tony Slattery (reading): **"I've always wanted to eat your roger, Dixon."**

Edwina Currie (protesting): **"No, that's his name. Roger Dixon."**

Authors who come on Ruby hoping for a profitable puff, have not been paying attention.

If it's any comfort to the wounded, nobody watches the show. Ruby often says so. "The Indians are gone . . . the Jews have left . . . the Jesuits are just tuning out. For the Buddhists who are still watching, do you want to apologise to those chickens who died?" The former Minister for Eggs stoutly refused, clearly holding to the Lloyd George dictum, "Never apologise. Say it again and this time ruder."

The guests are unusually intelligent and, when a show runs out of steam, Ruby visibly spits on her hands and delivers a stand-up, knock-down performance herself.

It's a pity nobody watches.

Cumbrian Tales **(BBC2) is a documentary series set in the village of Ireby, but it started in Soho.**

Ros, who is in advertising, is having a last lunch with the girls. She was leaving London to marry Roddy, a Cumbrian landowner. ("Very sexy, very rugged, very leathery, very old," according to the girls). Roddy, a charming, if mud-encrusted, chap in a cap said, "I've never lived in a city in my life. Too many people. I'd rather talk to a sheep."

The girls were agog. How did Roddy propose? Could he, in fact, *speak*? Ros said, "He couldn't actually say it. He said, 'Wi . . . wi . . . wi . . .' and tears were rolling down his face. When he said, 'Ros and I are getting married,' everyone spat out their sausage and bacon and mushrooms apart from his father, who carried on reading the racing."

By marrying a foreigner, that is someone up from the smoke, Roddy is acting contrary to local wisdom, which holds that you shouldn't go far away for your stock bull or your wife. You should know a bit about their breeding.

This promising series is made by Patrick McCreanor, who lives in Ireby. Well, he has, so far.

Taggart **(ITV), like the House of Lords, is a singular instance of life after death. How badly I miss Mark McManus and his little pursed-up, prune-like face, so steadily disapproving of virtually everything. But the show goes on awash, as usual, with gore.**

A call girl has had her throat comprehensively cut ("Not your usual sort of knifing. Jugular, trachea, cervical ligaments completely severed, apparently by a single stroke," said the pathologist, something of a connoisseur after many Taggarts).

"When the media find out what this woman did for a living, they'll be coming in through the windows!" warned Superintendent McVitie, of the biscuit family. Unfortunately, it was not the media but the murderer who came in through the windows with a sharp knife and killed another call girl.

This limits the suspects to people who can abseil down a tower block with a knife between their teeth. So that lets me out.

Bittersweet symphony

CINEMA
Andrew Pulver

MANY people thought The Thief, written and directed by Pavel Chukhrai, ought to have won this year's Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Maybe it was passed over because the Academy couldn't bring itself to vote in movies starring cute-as-a-button Russian kids two years in succession. However, The Thief is a considerably more bitter fable than last year's Czech winner, Kolya, even though both films mine similar seams of parental displacement amid massive social upheaval.

The child in The Thief's case is six-year-old Sanya (played to round-eyed perfection by Misha Philipchuk), born into the chaos of the USSR in the immediate aftermath of the second world war, and haunted by visions of his battle-victim father. His mother Katya (Yekaterina Rednikova) is drifting through the shattered country, alone and desperate. Both their prayers appear to be answered one night on a train by the sudden appearance of raffish soldier Tolyan (Vladimir Mashkov).

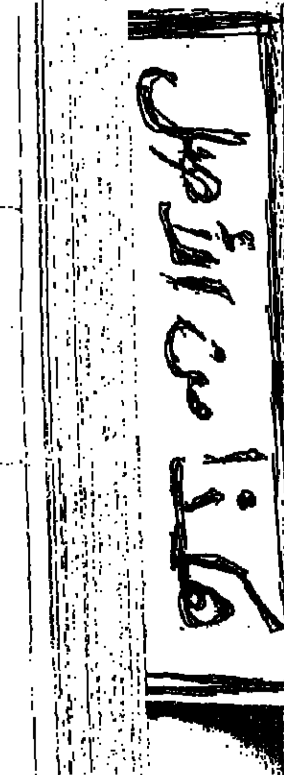
The announcement of a robbery seconds after Tolyan's entry into the picture is enough to suggest he's the villain of the title. Katya, however, isn't lucky enough to share the audience's foreknowledge, and falls heavily in love with her seemingly miraculous travelling companion — only for the truth to dawn on her several stops down the line, after Tolyan abruptly robs the friendly community they've settled down in.

The Thief, however, isn't simply a chronicle of deception and disillusion. Chukhrai dwells with sensitivity on the complex bonds that keep the makeshift family together: how the woman's revulsion at Tolyan's amorality becomes subordinate to her need for companionship, and how her fatherless child tries his hardest to become worthy. Stalin, inevitably, looms large in the background, reflected in the brutalities Tolyan inflicts on little Sanya. You can also see the attraction of the thief in Russia's current climate of instability: a romantic figure able to enjoy himself while the social fabric is breaking apart.

The same sense of blight and instability is everywhere in Wednesday 19.7.1961, an elliptical film from Russian documentarist Victor Kossakovsky. He doesn't explain its purpose until a good 20 minutes in: he's on a mission to track down the 101 people born on the same day as himself — July 19, 1961 — in the city that was then called Leningrad.

People drift through the frame as Kossakovsky cross-cuts between his multitude of subjects without a linking commentary. One woman hacks up a pig's ribcage on her kitchen floor; an entrepreneur explains his vision of a "luxury yacht" cruise he's planning; a transit policeman tells us: "No one was robbed today. That's progress."

A tapestry slowly emerges as the camera hops from one cramped apartment to another, with Kossakovsky content to dwell on the unease and bafflement of his contemporaries. His film is bookended with footage of women giving birth — one of whom says, "I want a healthy baby," as she stubs a cigarette out in an overflowing ashtray.



Light-filled view of the American dream

Jeffrey Frank

Bring Home the Revolution: How Britain Can Live the American Dream
by Jonathan Freedland
Fourth Estate 246pp £14.99

MUCH of Jonathan Freedland's interesting examination of America is in the tradition of a procession of 19th century travellers who visited the New World and deplored its faults and marvelled at its virtues, publishing books like Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy In America.

In Freedland's case, the report is positive, so much so that it should cheer up any American inclined to despond over the nation's prospects. The United States, in Freedland's reading, is a land where democracy is ascendant, language is plain, class distinctions are absent, and a civilisation of inclusiveness and charity has emerged from all the tumult — a land, in short, where one becomes somewhat misty at simply reading this sentence. Or, as Freedland writes, "The flag, the anthem, even the name of their country can make Americans teary-eyed."

Freedland is certainly not wrong. Above all, he is right in understanding that America is a settler nation — that the absorption of millions of talented men and women from other nations is a source of strength. But Freedland, an intelligent and observant journalist, intends to do more than write an honest and fond account of the United States at century's end. He also aims to present this somewhat idealised America as a place from which Britain may learn valuable lessons.

Freedland worked for several years in America and travelled widely, albeit to somewhat standard destinations. His accounts of these journeys are done well, but in the course of his reporting, one is constantly reminded that the codes of nationhood may defy easy translation. Thus, Freedland writes, "As a casual expression of approval, whether for a delicious ice-cream in New Jersey or a spectacular sunset in New Mexico, Americans will say, 'Is this a great country or what?'" In fact, we will say precisely those words in quite another context, with irony and affectionate self-loathing, when watching, say, cross-dressing mud-wrestlers on the Jerry Springer television programme.


Freedland advocates remedies for a glum Britain PHOTO: DOD MILLER

Pointing out such lapses may seem like petty quibbles, but they are indicative of more serious mistakes, and therefore undermine Freedland's premise that the customs, values and laws of one nation may be transferable to another. He cites the influence of ethnic minorities — Jews in New York, say, or Hispanics in Texas — as proof of democracy in action. The reality is that many minorities count disproportionately because of a distinctly anti-democratic quirk in the Election Law, the winner-takes-all electoral college, which dates to the 18th century and so skews the result of a presidential election that the winner of a popular majority could lose the White House — and, in the case of Samuel J Tilden in 1876, has.

Freedland is emphatic about the benefits of divided government (the executive, legislative, and judicial branches), believing that its drawbacks (gridlock) are outweighed by its merits (putting the brakes on bad law). But many of America's silliest laws are passed by the 50 separate states, where, Freedland observes correctly, considerable power still resides. The point of Freedland's provocative book, though, is not to applaud the United States, but to prescribe remedies for Britain — "ten steps that would alter Britain profoundly". He suggests that the House of Windsor should be abolished — but be sceptical when he says that a head of state "can still inspire the awe and respect once aroused by the monarchy". He writes that "Americans love their presidents and worship the presidency. They make myths of F D R and J F K . . ." Lincoln, too. But there's been little myth-making of late. Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton sounds less like a pantheon of greatness and more like an unfortunate law firm that keeps losing its clients.

In the end, Freedland argues that the ideas of liberty and equality that flourished in the American colonies came in large part from Britain; and, indisputably, Thomas Jefferson could not have existed without John Locke or, for that matter, Hume or Hobbes. But Freedland then carries this a bit further. "The Founding Fathers," he writes, "were English radicals, who took a revolution intended for us and shipped it across the Atlantic." That is a light-filled view of what actually happened in a strange, new land, settled also by the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese; by religious refugees, including English Quakers, Spanish Jews, French Huguenots, German and Swiss Mennonites; and roiled still further by the slave trade.

As for those English radicals, Freedland writes, "they exported our rightful destiny. It is time to bring it back home." The cast that now includes Bill Gates, Ross Perot, Mickey Mouse and Monica Lewinsky. I mean, is this a great country, or what?

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £13 contact CultureShop (see below)

Legend before wicket

David Horspool

W G Grace: A Life
by Simon Rae
Faber 548pp £20

THE esteem in which W G Grace was held during his lifetime was expressed in innumerable ways by fellow players, commentators and spectators. One occasional cricketer who combined all three roles, Arthur Conan Doyle, was moved to immortalise in verse the feat of having Grace caught off his own "losh" bowling, late in the champion's career: "I captured that glorious wicket, / The greatest, the grandest of all." The achievement is duly recorded in Simon Rae's exhaustive, celebratory biography — published to coincide with the 150th anniversary of Grace's birth — with the laconic additional observation that "what Conan Doyle omitted to mention is that Grace had scored 110 before he was brought into the attack".

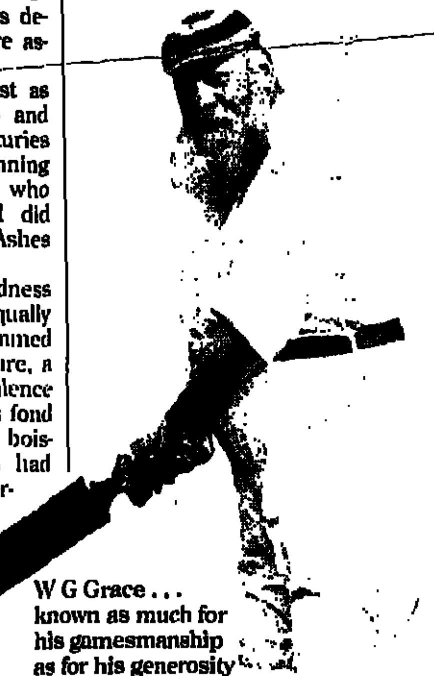
Though Conan Doyle's triumph came in the twilight of Grace's cricketing life, he can be forgiven for his reaction. Grace *was* cricket for more than 40 years, and at times during his long career, it seemed as if he were playing on a different plane to those around him.

The background to Grace's dominance was a family atmosphere almost calculated to raise sporting heroes. His lifelong adherence to practice and long hours in the nets were instilled at an early age, encouraged by his cricket-mad father and brothers, with the additional help of his mother's criticisms of batting technique.

Most of Grace's records have now been eclipsed, and Rae deals early on with those doubters who believe that he was a mere giant among pygmies. Grace's complete domination of the game meant that he wielded unparalleled power at a time when cricket's popularity was increasing. Grace's amateur status was notoriously nominal, and although he did eventually qualify as a doctor, working conscientiously in the winter, his practice was run by a locum during the season. Meanwhile he made far more money from appearance fees and "expenses" than the professionals, and his demands for touring money were astonishingly high.

Grace is now known almost as much for his gamesmanship and sharp practice as for his centuries and bowling returns. His running out of an Australian batsman who assumed the ball was dead did much to fuel the acrimony of Ashes encounters ever since.

But examples of Grace's kindness and generosity are almost equally abundant. His lapses all stemmed from an over-competitive nature, a general air of schoolboy truculence which never left him. He was fond of practical jokes of the most boisterous kind. After the days had passed when he would interrupt an innings at The Oval to win a hurdles race across town, his enthusiasm for other sports still extended to bowls (in which be captained England), golf, curling, shooting and fishing. His physique eventually resembled his reputation — his coffin weighed over 20 stone — but he maintained an extraordinary energy to the last, playing his final innings only a year before he died. Rae's book is a fittingly monumental tribute to an irrepressible icon.


W G Grace . . . known as much for his gamesmanship as for his generosity

Paperbacks
Veronica Horwell

Duncan Grant, by Frances Spalding (Pimlico, £14)

CHARLESTON again, darlings, and Bloomsbury: with Virginia having problems with Orlando, and the dinner service commissioned by the swanky Kenneth Clark (director of the National Gallery) and executed by Duncan and Co turning out to have Queen Vic, Greta Garbo, Miss 1933, or indeed Duncan himself on the plate once you'd wiped the sauce off. Alternates between exasperatingly cliquish (it can sound like a ghastly party given in the next flat) and insightful.

The Buildings of England — London: the City Churches, by Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner (Penguin, £9.99)

FULL of heroes nominated after centuries anonymous in the tombs they built themselves: the masons, joiners and carvers are here credited beside the mighty Wren: plasterwork by Doogood & Grove; Master Matthew Roberts plumber; and Israel Knowles, carpenter of St Benet's Welsh Church. There is nothing so powerfully artless about the names and work of those who restored, or swept away after — the Decimus Burtons and Quinlan Terrys.

The Thames & Hudson Dictionary of Fashion, ed Georgina O'Hara Callan (£8.99)

THIS defines both the specific technical vocabulary of fashion (lamé, linen, loafer) and acts as biographical companion to named designers and influences. How can they have Audrey and Katharine Hepburn but not Slim Hawks, wife to director Howard Hawks, who gave us much of the American smart-is-sexy tailored coolness we now attribute to Ralph Lauren? Simone de Beauvoir in a Hermès 1930s playsuit, pretending to the severe yet impractical, illustrating resortwear, tells you a great deal about that woman's aspirations.

Ancient Mosaics, by Roger Ling (British Museum Press, £12.99)

FIRST publication with a wide enough range of illustrations to be able to see clearly that classical mosaics came in ranges of price, taste and competence. By top end of the trade standards, the Lullingstone Villa, Kent, picture of the Rape of Europa, set into the floor just where diners reclining on their couches might admire, looks suspiciously DIY. Classical repros of important paintings look frankly naff, but there's a Tunisian pavement happy with grapes and birds and babies which makes you smile on sight.

Peeping Tom, by Leo Marks (Faber Classic Screenplays, £8.99)

THE opening interview is jaw-dropping: Marks in his 20s in WWII was Special Operations Executive's codemaster, wrote executed agent Violette Szabo's trueheart code poem, and researched an hysterical paper on Cyphers, Signals and Sex. All cryptographers, he intuited, are voyeurs; and cinema makes voyeurs of us all. During briefings with those about to parachute to torture and death he composed this film, and long after offered it to Michael Powell.

Spectres at the feast

Peter Conrad

Progress and Barbarism: The World in the Twentieth Century
by Clive Ponting
Chatto & Windus 584pp £30

GIVEN our hysteria about the approach of the millennium it is soothing to be reminded that, in the view of many, the 20th century never happened. Why worry about the year 2000 when, as Clive Ponting points out, "for most of the world's people 1 January 1900 was not the start of a new century"? The Chinese calibrated time according to the emperor's reign, and Muslims were seven centuries behind the Christian calendar. 1900 did not seem epochal for Jews, because according to their calculations the year was 5661. Russia, chronically jet-lagged, stuck with the Julian calendar which was not synchronised with the Gregorian.

Nevertheless, in what Ponting guardedly calls the Christian West, the 20th century did take place, and the best reason for commemorating its end is to express amazement that mankind and the earth it exploits and ravages have survived these apparently terminal decades.

The century began with a promise of universal renovation, its optimism sustained by science and technology. This jubilation is shaming to look back on now: the 20th century, as Ponting concludes, brought "progress for a minority and barbarism for the overwhelming majority", and there is no reason to believe that this inequity will not persist and intensify once the New Year's Eve binge is over.

In 1900 men rejoiced because they thought they had beaten the evolutionary odds, having medically prolonged the human life-span and overcome all the other exigencies of nature. But as Ponting gloomily indicates, a few countries boosted the life expectancy of their citizens by curing childhood ailments and "airborne diseases such as tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia" — but for how long, since the infections we thought were obsolete have now proved to be virulent all over again? And our hygienic civilisation devised its own new modes of death, tributes to satiety: heart disease and cancer.

Ponting's book is a necrological horror show, but perhaps the most shocking fact in it is one which denounces the modern faith in motorisation. So far in the 20th century, 25 million people have been killed by motor vehicles. (Only 14 million — only! — died as a result of genocide, which is another of our century's evil innovations. Technology may have alleviated our lives, but its grand contribution to the century has been the industrialisation of slaughter. Ponting's chapter on conflict, one of his best, shows how war changed and became "total" as a result of new weaponry.

A family in the Third Reich, one of the worst moments in a century that Ponting feels brought 'barbarism for the overwhelming majority'

Armies no longer retired to the countryside to settle quarrels according to chivalric rules, leaving women and children safely at home. The "final solution" engineered by the Nazis depended on hydrogen cyanide gas, eagerly and profitably supplied by the chemical company I G Farben.

Of course technology can, perhaps inadvertently, turn out to be a boon. Ponting identifies the repressive, forcibly centralised state as one of the century's malign inventions. Totalitarian regimes used the new media of communication to mobilise their citizens and control their minds: the Third Reich issued radio receivers to all German households, guaranteeing that everyone was attuned — literally and metaphorically — to the apocalyptic ranting of the Führer.

But the same technology, as it developed further, outwitted such monopolistic political systems. Television, beaming the imagery of affluence across the Berlin Wall, helped to sabotage communism; and Ponting trusts that fax machines, portable phones, e-mail and the worldwide web, which instantly transmit information around the globe, will ensure that we remain "beyond the control of any government".

For the most part, Ponting's book is numbingly numerical, too seldom enlivened by anecdotes. But given the morbidity of his conclusions, his dour, plain style is perhaps appropriate to our century, in which, as Ernest Hemingway pointed out in A Farewell To Arms, abstract, honorific words such as nationalism or patriotism have become obscene, and only quantities — the casualty lists of the millions killed by our modern plagues — can be believed in.

Colleagues in trivia

James Wood

Model Behaviour
by Jay McInerney
Bloomsbury 224pp £14.99

THE PECULIAR difficulty for the contemporary American writer is the tigerish excitement of American culture. Along with your pulse, and stronger than it, can be felt the ticking ceaselessness of the modern. It is a culture that is not only louder than literature, but about which nothing very interesting may be said, because it is always producing its own smart self-commentary. It is rudely, unignorably present. It would be impossible for a contemporary writer to ignore it.

The danger, for the novelist, is a trivial parallelism. Eager to swim in America, but bloated with mimesis, the novel merely drowns in America. Even a good writer, such as Don DeLillo, has had the greatest difficulty, in recent years, in finding an ambivalence and an irony towards the culture which he is properly critical of. And this is not, of course, an American problem any more, but a European one, too; we are colleagues in trivia.

Jay McInerney is an entertainer and not, judged by the highest standards, a serious or ambitious novelist. Nevertheless his books offer an example of a writer struggling precisely with the contemporary dilemma of how to write about a reality that has become overpoweringly interesting. McInerney's novels, filled with the depiction of glamorous imbecilities and hilarious excesses, are acute about a certain kind of Manhattan amorality. They offer a swift, intelligent guide to the latest racket. Yet too often his fiction seems uneasily proximate to the foolishness he rakes through. McInerney has the mind of a satirist and the soul of an insider.

For a while, the satirist seems powerful in his new novel. The empty, guzzling world of New York fashion journalism is wonderfully defenestrated and comes crashing down. McInerney's narrator, Connor McKnight, works for a magazine called CiaoBella! He is literary, acerbic, and idle. He dislikes his job and despises the celebrity interviews he must do with film actors.

His beautiful girlfriend, Philomena, is a model who is trying to break into acting. The only way she seems to do this is by running off with Chip Ralston, a young movie star. Connor spends most of the novel trying to get her back, consoled by Jeremy Green, a misanthropic writer of short stories. Jeremy is an amusing creation, and through him McInerney makes some of his funniest swipes — about the carnivorous nature of publishing and reviewing, and also about Jeremy's morbid literary purism: "He professes a horror of the wet kiss of popular taste, although he bitterly resents his obscurity *vis-à-vis* certain writers he considers far less talented."

A New York scene, familiar to us from Bright Lights, Big City, and Brightness Falls, is expertly denuded. There is Tina Christian, the witless advice columnist on CiaoBella!, who blunders from party to party: "Were you at the Versace thing last night — and if so can you tell me if I was?" There is Connor's terrifying boss, Jillian Crowe, a whippet-thin clothes-board who has sex only with men who are already involved with someone else. The motto of this world, says Connor, is no longer do unto others as you would have done unto you, but "Behave unto others as if they were about to become incredibly famous".

All this is boisterous and tickling, and Connor lets us know that he is on the side of moral right. He tells us proudly that he has a "lack of starfucking passion . . . at the mag, it is a source of collective shame that I possess not a single item of apparel bearing the Prada or Gucci logos". Elsewhere, he says: "I hate what I do for a living, and hate myself for what I have failed to do with my life." Yet it is at just this moment that Connor, and McInerney, seem rather more complicit with this modern vapidity than they suspect. Connor supposedly looks down on this world, but it is all he ever talks about. Yes, McInerney might say, and that is supposed to be the point — he cannot get beyond this glossily enwebbing world. But, alas, neither can the novel. Model Behaviour comes on all satirical, but its heart is entirely in this world. For there is literally nothing else in the book except the depiction of glamour. And, while satirical, it is hardly very vicious. McInerney's satire resembles an abandoned spouse who cannot stop talking critically of his old partner; it's a love affair, really.

At one point in the book, Connor blushes, and someone says: "I didn't know anyone knew how to blush any more." It is one of the best lines in the book. McInerney uses Connor's knowingness to confirm the triviality of Manhattan but this is a small task and, alas, the result is a small book, plump with the latest news of America's sleeplessness.

Streets of cyberspace

Simon Reynolds

More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures In Sonic Fiction
by Kodwo Eshun
Quartet 219pp £10

THIS is a survey of the "black science fiction" tendency in music, from Lee Perry and George Clinton to contemporary sonic wizards such as Tricky and Goldie. Although the idea of "Afro-futurism" has been broached before (most notably by American critics Mark Dery and Greg Tate), Kodwo Eshun's book is the most sustained and penetrating analysis to date of what the author calls "sonic fiction": the otherworldly vistas and alien mindscapes conjured by genres such as dub reggae, hip-hop, techno, and jungle.

The book kicks off at blitzkrieg pace and ferocity, with a manifesto that excoriates music journalists and cultural studies academics for being "future shock absorbers", forever domesticating the strangeness of music. Eshun is particularly scathing about treatments of black pop that analyse it in terms of soul, roots and "the street". Rejecting these notions of raw expression and social realism, Eshun instead celebrates a lineage of black conceptualists, speculators and fabulists. These renegade autodidacts — Sun Ra, Rammellzee, Dr Octagon, Underground Resistance's Mike Banks and Jeff Mills — weave syncretic and idiosyncratic cosmologies using an array of esoteric sources. Eshun tracks this "MythScience" through lyrics, songs and album titles, cover artwork, and (in Underground Resistance's case) hermetic slogans etched into the run-out vinyl of 12-inch singles.

As well as decoding these encrypted expressions of the Afro-Futurist imagination, Eshun focuses on the materiality of the music — jungle's convoluted break-beat rhythms, the head-wrecking delirium of dub production and "remixology", the timbral violence of the hip-hop DJ's scratching.

It's a provocative stance, for sure, but at times you wonder if the baby hasn't been thrown out with the proverbial bathwater. Jungle, for instance, is probably best understood as a tangle of "roots and future", to borrow a phrase from drum and bass outfit Phuture Assassins; as a subculture and a sound, it has one foot in the concrete jungles of Kingston, Jamaica, and the other in the data jungles of cyberspace. And is it really true, as Eshun seems to insist, that hip-hop or reggae are diminished by attempts to locate them in a social context?

Eshun's stylistic dazzle (every sentence aspires to be a bomb going off in your head) is highly effective in conveying the intensities of music, but it does mean that More Brilliant is best consumed in short spurts and small sips; a little pacing, the odd workaday bridging sentence, wouldn't have hurt.

Still, if the absolute measure of any music book is the extent to which it makes you want to hear the records, this is a blinding success. It will get you rushing off to hunt down George Russell's Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature, a 1968 masterpiece of studio-warped "electric jazz", or Alice Coltrane's controversial tetralogy of albums that orchestrally remixed the music of late husband John.

Scotland's fragile peaks

Mark Cocker

BY WORLD standards the Cairngorm range in northern Scotland is an insignificant set of mountains. The tallest peak, Ben Macdui, is a mere 1,309 metres — about the height of the lowest foothills in the Alps. In the Himalayas you can be twice that elevation in the valley bottoms. But by British standards the Cairngorm is very high. The range holds four of the five tallest mountains in the country and the whole massif is almost 4,000 sq km, the biggest area of genuine wilderness left in the United Kingdom.

When we walked there recently, struggling up to the Cairngorm summit, then threading our way among crumbling granite boulders towards the extensive plateau around Ben Macdui, we were struck by one overwhelming sensation — the vast silence of the place. For hours we never heard another living creature; not even the lonely croak of a passing raven. Our only companionship was the sound of our own breath and our voices. Occasionally we saw other walkers, but they were usually mere specks beetling around in their own pockets of solitude.

The other dominant impression left by this magnificent landscape was its emptiness. In a whole day I saw a single insect — an indistinct, grizzled grey moth about the size of my little finger nail. However, we did find the full complement of the region's breeding birds, all three of them specialists of the sub-arctic tundra on the Cairngorm tops.

Unfamiliar with humans or their predatory instincts, they were also exceptionally tame. The snow buntings hopped among us while we picnicked and a pair of ptarmigan relied on their remarkable camouflage until we were just a couple of metres from where they sat. The third, a dotterel, a brilliantly coloured female (in this species the gender roles are reversed), continued to feed contentedly until we were right on top of it. But apparently dotterels are almost indifferent to this kind of intrusion.

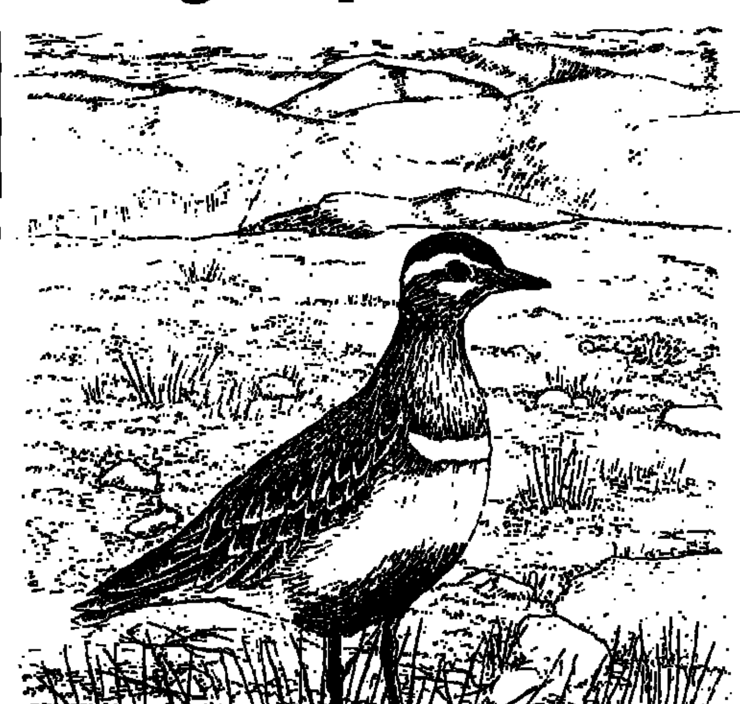


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

This is probably just as well, given current plans to build a funicular railway on Cairngorm. The scheme, which has attracted government backing, involves blasting out a 2km line for an underground railway to the plateau rim. Although the developers' projected visitor total of 165,000 per year is widely viewed as optimistic — to overemphasise its benefits to local economy and employment — there is little doubt that the funicular would hugely increase human pressure on the area. Despite its grand scale Cairngorm is a fragile environment, and even now erosion and trampling of its internationally important vegetation are significant problems.

The project has been approved by the Government's own conservation agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, but most other environmental organisations strongly oppose the development. The World Wide Fund for Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have sought a judicial review of the scheme, arguing that it breaches European directives on environmental protection.

For decades Cairngorm has been a focus for winter sports in the Highlands, and all parties recognise its importance to the local economy and the need to upgrade the current facilities. However, both WWF and the RSPB favour a gondola chairlift scheme that would allow full access to the tops only for skiers. All other visitors would be able to ride to a station at 600m where they could connect with downhill walks through the Abernethy forest, one of the largest remnants of native pine woodland in Scotland. But inbuilt into this scheme is a natural check on visitor numbers to the more sensitive upper reaches of Cairngorm: the steep 600m climb to its summit.

Chess Leonard Barden

MICHAEL ADAMS is edging closer to the absolute world top. The 26-year-old Cornishman is now ahead of both Karpov, the Fide champion, and Shirov, the challenger for Kasparov's title.

Kasparov and Shirov are due to play a $1.6 million title match in October. Karpov meanwhile talks of boycotting the Fide world title if it becomes an annual event. It's not hard to envisage Adams becoming a desirable opponent for one or both Ks, but time will tell.

A theory debate from the final round at the recent Dortmund tournament:

P Leko v P Svidler

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3 d5 The in-vogue Marshall Attack aims for active pieces and an attack on the white king, with a fall-back plan of a bishops of opposite colours endgame. It may be pragmatic to dodge the gambit by 8 a4, as Kasparov did in his 1993 title match with Short.

9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5 c6 12 d3 Currently preferred to 12 d4. **Bd6 13 Re1 Qh4 14 g3 Qh3 15 Re4 Qf5 16 Nd2 Qg6 17 Re1?!** Instead 17 Nf1!? f5 18 Rd4 f4 19 Rxd5 cxd5 20 Bxd5+ Be6 21 Be4! looks critical.

17 . . . f5!? Adams tried 17. . . Bg4 (Qxd3?? 18 Bc2 wins the queen) 18 f3 Bh3 twice at Groningen 1997, but 19 Ne4 gave a white edge. Opening the f file is much stronger.

18 Nf3 f4 19 Ne5 Bxe5 20 Rxe5 fxg3 21 hxg3 Bg4 22 Qe1 Bf3 23 Bd2 Rae8 24 a4 h6 25 Bd1 Rxe5 26 Qxe5 Bxd1 27 Rxd1 Qxd3 28 Qd4 Qf3 29 Be1 Ne3! A neat finish, probably foreseen several moves earlier. Black regains the piece, then demolishes the WK's defences. **30 fxe3 Qe2 31 Bf2 Qxf2+ 32 Kh1 Qxg3 33 axb5 Rf5 34 Qd8+ Kh7 35 Qd3 Qg6 36 Resigns.** Black mates or wins the queen.

Nigel Short scored his best result for six years with an impressive 7/9 in the Keres Memorial tournament at Tallinn last month. Nigel's win against the current Estonian champion is a smooth lesson in how two bishops can run rings round a rook in the endgame.

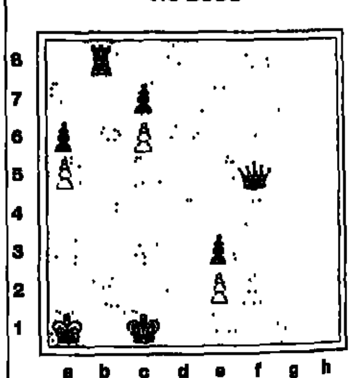
T Seeman v N Short

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 f3 e5 6 Nb3 d5 7 Bg5 Be6 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 exd5 Qxd5 10 Qxd5 Bxd5 Black's bishop pair more than offsets his doubled pawns.

11 Nc3 Be6 12 0-0-0 Nd7 13 Nb5 Ke7 14 Nd6 b6 15 Bb5 Rd8 16 Rd3? Much better is 16 Bc4. **Bh6+ 17 Kb1 Nb8!** White's army is in a traffic jam.

18 Rhd1 a6 19 Bc4 Rxd6 20 Rxd6 Bxc4 21 Rxb6 Be3 22 Rb4 Rc8 23 Na5 Bb5 24 Rh4 Bd7! 25 Rd3 Bd4 26 Rb3 Nc6 27 Nxc6+ Bxc6 28 c3 Bd5 29 Ra3 Bf2 The same theme: if 30 Rxh7 e4! and the e pawn runs through. **30 Rh5 Rg8 31 c4** 31 g3 Bxf3 is worse. **Bxc4 32 g3 Bd4 33 Rxh7 Rb8 34 Resigns.** If 34 b3 Bd3+ finally wins the h7 rook.

No 2533



Hans Ek v Leo Weber, Athens 1971. Black (to move) has only a rook for a queen, but his king has marched into the white camp. What result with best play?

No 2532: 1 Kb7 Kxb5 2 Ra8 Bxd5+ 3 Ka7 Kc6 4 Ka6 Bxe4 5 Ra7 Bd3 mate.

Quick crossword no. 428

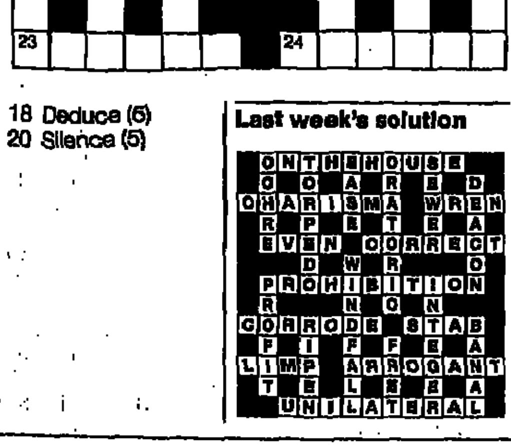
Across

1 Conflict (6)
4 Weaken (6)
8 Tag (5)
9 Close — agreement (7)
10 Wealthy (7)
11 Female relative (5)
12 Rot (9)
17 Goodbye (5)
19 Need (7)
21 Hooligan (7)
22 Lifeless (5)
23 Vocal organ (6)
24 Still (6)

Down

1 Infrequently (6)
2 Recoil (7)
3 Untrue (5)
5 Souvenir (7)
6 Conscious (5)
7 Cad (6)
9 Twin-hulled vessel (9)
13 Wariness (7)
14 Manifest (7)
15 Hardy, no; evergreen, yes (6)
16 Feverish (6)
18 Deduce (5)
20 Silence (5)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

IN THE Guardian Weekly (June 28), I described a hand played by the great Dutch international Bob Slavenburg. I mentioned in passing a deal on which Slavenburg had made a contract of two spades doubled when his opponents were cold for a grand slam — in spades! Since then, many of you have written to ask about the deal — so here it is.

In the very early days of bridge, bluff or "psychic" bids were commonplace. The great match between Culbertson's American team and Great Britain was littered with overcalls on singletons, opening bids on Yarboroughs, all kinds of outrageous attempts to rob the opponents of what was rightfully theirs.

Even in Slavenburg's time, the psychic bid was a weapon used far more commonly than it is today. Modern experts set great store on bidding accuracy; they prefer to concentrate on making the technically correct call for every hand, rather than trying to swindle the opponents. Moreover competitive bidding has improved to the extent that opponents find it rather easier to deal with attempts to pull the wool over their eyes. So, you are most unlikely to see a great player of today emulate Slavenburg's actions on these cards:

♠62 ♥95 ♦43 ♣AQJ7652

Bob was in the ideal position for an "operation" — not vulnerable against vulnerable opponents. East on his right opened one heart, so Bob overcalled one spade! West doubled for penalties, North and East passed, and Bob had to select an escape route. The faint-hearted might have tried two clubs, but faint-hearted is an adjective that was never applied to Bob Slavenburg. He bid one no trump! West doubled again, and North bid two spades. This time, East found a double, and it was up to Bob once more. Three clubs at this point would be unremarkable, but North was a solid performer who would be all too likely to give "preference" to spades, despite the warning signs. So Slavenburg passed two spades doubled and bowed his head for the executioner's axe.

The full deal is at top of the next column. The defenders are in a position to draw trumps and cash 14 tricks — four spades, five hearts, and five diamonds. West started off on the right foot with the lead of the ace of spades. But, unable to believe the true position, he continued with the king and queen of trumps, setting up

North
♠ 8543
♥ 7632
♦ 952
♣ K4

West
♠ AKQ7
♥ KJ
♦ KJ6
♣ 10983

East
♠ J109
♥ AQ1084
♦ AQ1087
♣ None

South
♠ 62
♥ 95
♦ 43
♣ AQJ7652

South Slavenburg	West	North	East
			1♥
1♠!	Dble	Pass	Pass
1NT!	Dble	2♠	Dble
Pass!	Pass	Pass	

dummy's eight. If he had switched to a red suit now, Slavenburg could still have been held to five tricks — but West put the finishing touches to the most expensive defence of all time by leading a club to the fourth trick. Bob won with dummy's king, drew West's last trump with North's eight, and cashed six more clubs to make his contract.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Captain Stewart takes over the helm for one-day series

ALEC STEWART will captain England in next month's triangular one-day tournament against South Africa and Sri Lanka. Stewart's appointment, in preference to his Surrey team-mate and skipper Adam Hollioake, represents a premature end to the experiment of fielding different captains at Test and one-day level, before any firm conclusions could be reached.

For the fourth Test against South Africa at Trent Bridge, England — 1-0 down with two Tests remaining — have conscripted Lancashire's burly in-form batsman Andrew Flintoff into their squad of 13. Graeme Hick has been recalled to replace the injured Graham Thorpe, while also making a comeback are batsman Mark Butcher, leg-spinner Ian Salisbury and pace bowler Alan Mullally.

The full squad is: Atherton, Butcher, Hussain, Stewart, Ramprakash, Hick, Flintoff, Cork, Croft, Salisbury, Mullally, Gough and Fraser.



Flintoff: Trent Bridge call-up

LIVERPOOL waved tradition goodbye when they appointed a foreigner to their management team. Gérard Houllier, the former French national team coach, has been named as joint team manager alongside the current incumbent Roy Evans. Houllier, whose contract as French technical director ended after the World Cup, has chosen Liverpool in preference to five other British clubs, including Celtic.

While Houllier's appointment cast doubts over Evans's long-term future at the Merseyside club the Frenchman was quick to point out that he will be part of an equal partnership. "We are here to bring trophies to Anfield," he said.

The announcement of Houllier's appointment came just hours after the veteran first-team coach Ronnie Moran retired after nearly 50 years' service at Anfield. Moran joined the club in 1949 and played 379 times. He was caretaker manager briefly in 1991 after Kenny Dalglish stepped down, and was part of the so-called Boot Room tradition of promoting from within.

Celtic stunned their fans by naming Dr Jozef Venglos as their head coach. The 62-year-old Slovakian has managed Australia, Czechoslovakia, Malaysia and was in charge at Aston Villa for a season following the departure of Graham Taylor in 1990. "He is not as glamorous a name as we had come to expect, but we must give him a chance," said a spokesman for the supporters.

MICHAEL DOOHAN recorded his 50th grand prix victory when he won the German 500cc at Sachsenring. The Australian, chasing a fifth world title, led from the start on his Honda and finished in 46min 00.876sec.

Italy's Max Biaggi was second and Spain's Alex Criville completed a Honda sweep after Simon Crafar of New Zealand crashed his Yamaha on the 12th lap when he was in third place. It was Doohan's fourth win of the season and he now leads the championship by 12 points from Biaggi.

HICHAM El GUERROUJ of Morocco took more than a second off the world 1,500-metre record at the Golden Gala meeting in Rome — one of the biggest times ever taken off the blue-riband record. Guerrouj sank to his knees, buried his head in his hands and then raised them upwards in thanks. The record he beat was set three years ago by the Algerian Noureddine Morceli in 3min 27.37sec.

At Gateshead, Scotsman Dougie Walker won the 300m event by nearly 0.25sec, in 31.56. His time took 0.11 off the six-year-old European and Commonwealth best held by John Regis.

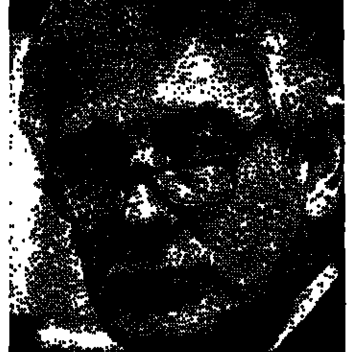
MICHAEL SCHUMACHER will become Formula One's richest driver after signing a new contract which could net him nearly $250 million and keep him at the Italian team Ferrari until the end of 2002. The contract will involve the 29-year-old German acting as an ambassador for Fiat, which controls Ferrari.

Schumacher is also on course to become the most successful Formula One driver of all time. He has notched up 31 victories so far. Only the late Brazilian Ayrton Senna (41 wins) and France's Alain Prost (51) are ahead of him. With at least 70 races remaining to the end of his Ferrari tenure, there is every chance of a new record.

BOXING'S fragile image was further tarnished when rioting broke out among fans at Rivermead Centre in Reading during the sixth round of the British welterweight title fight between Geoff McCreesh and the Welshman Michael Smyth. Two people were injured and four arrests made as rival supporters fought each other and threw chairs. Smyth, who failed to beat the holder, was so disgusted by the crowd's behaviour that he indicated he might quit the sport.

Meanwhile Chris Eubank failed in his second attempt to wrest the World Boxing Organisation version of the world cruiserweight title from the Manchester boxer Carl Thompson. After nine rounds a ringside doctor ruled Eubank unfit to continue because of a swollen eye.

BRAZIL'S star striker Ronaldo, criticised for his lacklustre performance in the World Cup final against France, told a TV interviewer that he took a tranquilliser pill only hours before the game after suffering a 30-second fit.



Voted out . . . Brittle

Brittle peace for England

AN ERA of acrimony and in-fighting unprecedented in English rugby union came to an end last Sunday with the election of Brian Baister as chairman of the Rugby Football Union's Management Board at its annual meeting in Birmingham, *writes Robert Armstrong*.

Baister, a former deputy chief constable of Cheshire, defeated the incumbent Cliff Brittle by 520 votes to 345 in an election characterised by innuendo and personal abuse by the supporters of both candidates.

The departure of Brittle will make it easier for Twickenham to implement the Mayfair Agreement between the top clubs and the union — whereby players are made available for international duty — when the season begins on September 5.

Suggestions that Clive Woodward's position as England coach would be jeopardised by Brittle's defeat were dismissed by Baister, who blamed the RFU's "bad management" for the disastrous tour to this summer's southern hemisphere.

Rugby Union Tri-Nations series

Australia are left to rue mistakes

Greg Growden in Perth

THE South Africa rugby coach Nick Mallett has antagonised the northern hemisphere powers further by describing the Tri-Nations series as the true world cup tournament.

Mallett, celebrating his 10th successive Test victory and South Africa's first on Australian soil since 1993, argued that the close nature of the Tri-Nations and the overwhelming strength of the three southern hemisphere nations make it the true guide to the best team in the world.

At Subiaco Oval last Saturday night Australia and South Africa hardly provided one of international rugby's great spectacles, with the Springboks relying on the Wallabies' losing the plot in the final quarter to win 14-13. Western Australia's first Test match was ruined by wet weather, endless kicking and substandard play by both teams.

Still, Mallett said it was way ahead of anything on offer in the northern hemisphere, especially the Five Nations tournament. This followed the Australian Rugby Union chief executive John O'Neill's threat last week that, if the home unions continued sending substandard teams on tour, the Tri-Nations would be turned into a six-nations, with France, Argentina and Western Samoa invited to join an extended tournament, possibly as soon as next year. Argentina have already been approached.

Mallett said that the Tri-Nations was "a really tough competition . . . I think this is the world cup, to be honest. Australia have improved by 20 per cent, as have South Africa, while New Zealand have lost a couple of key players."

Mallett could afford to be cocky after watching Australia lose the Test rather than South Africa winning it. Australia, who could have gone well ahead on the Tri-Nations ladder, handed the game to their opponents through incept play, abysmal goalkicking, disorganisation in the line-out and lack of intelligence in the final minutes.

In the 63rd minute the full-back Matthew Burke had the chance to put Australia 16-14 ahead but missed a penalty from 25 metres in front of the posts. Unlike in Melbourne last week, where he scored all Australia's points against New Zealand, he had a horror night in Perth, missing four of his five kicks at goal.

Then in the final minute Australia had an attacking scrum only 15 metres from the South Africa line. The logical option was a drop goal from Burke or the fly-half Stephen Larkham but the Wallaby backs lined up in an ACT Brumbies-like attacking formation and the moment was wasted when the ball was lost at the back of the scrum.

South Africa now travel to New Zealand for Saturday's Test in Wellington, and after the game all three teams are likely to boast one win from two matches.

● England defeated Wales 15-12 in a Rugby League international at Widnes. The fixture had a dual purpose: reviving the Wales team for the first time since 1996 and allowing Andy Goodway, the Great Britain coach, to assess his players at an intermediate level. Wales's brave performance more than justified the first objective, but the poor quality of handling in wet conditions left Goodway with more questions than answers.

Cycling Tour de France

Team thrown out after drugs scandal

William Fotheringham

FRANCE's euphoria after the triumph of the World Cup has proved short-lived. The country's greatest sporting institution, the Tour de France, is in crisis following the expulsion of its leading team after the biggest drug scandal to hit the race in its 95-year history and threats of legal action.

The Festina Watches team were thrown out last week, nine days after the arrest of team masseur Willy Voet on the Franco-Belgian border. His car contained 400 flasks of the banned drugs erythropoeitin, human growth hormone, and anabolic steroids.

Erythropoeitin, commonly known as EPO, is a hormone which stimulates the bone marrow to produce red blood cells, thus increasing performance. It is usually taken with aspirin to prevent blood thickening, which can lead to heart attacks. Human growth hormone assists the body to recover from physical effort.

Later, the Festina team manager Bruno Roussel and the team doctor, Eric Rijckaert, were arrested and questioned. Then, Roussel's lawyer, Thiboult de Montbriault, issued a statement confirming that riders were supplied with banned drugs. "Roussel has explained the conditions in which riders were provided with doping products, and how this was organised by the team management, the team doctors, the masseurs and the riders.

"The objective was to maximise the riders' performance under strict medical control to prevent them obtaining drugs for themselves in ways which could seriously affect their health."

Roussel and Rijckaert have been charged with supplying drugs at sporting events.

Festina have not won a stage so far in this year's Tour de France, but they won four stages, and were the best team in last year's race, led by France's national hero, Richard Virenque. He finished second and was crowned King of the Mountains for the fourth successive year. They currently hold the number one position in cycling's world computer rankings. Also banned was Laurent Brochard.

Since the seizure, the riders have maintained their innocence. The Frenchman Pascal Hervé, who was leader in the King of the Mountains competition when he was excluded, protested: "I didn't take erythropoietin. The only products I took were things to help me recover so that my form could be good."

And judging by the placards along the route of last Sunday's stage from Brive-la-Gaillarde to Montauban — "Why Festina and not the others?" was one example — the French public view Virenque and his team-mates as victims of injustice.

Virenque's tearful exit certainly added weight to this interpretation. "Everyone knows that drug-taking goes on in the *peloton*," said his manager, Michel Gros. "We are just the sacrificial lambs."

The Festina team are threatening legal action against the organisers of the race.

The Tour de France organiser Jean-Marie Leblanc, a former professional cyclist himself, said the riders were being excluded as "a lesson to the Tour de France and cycling which we hope will be a salutary one, and will end the unhealthy atmosphere which has been present at the race".

On Monday the president of the International Cycling Union, Hein Verbruggen, warned of further expulsions after reports that French customs had found 104 syringes primed with EPO in a car driven by mechanics of the Dutch TVM team.

